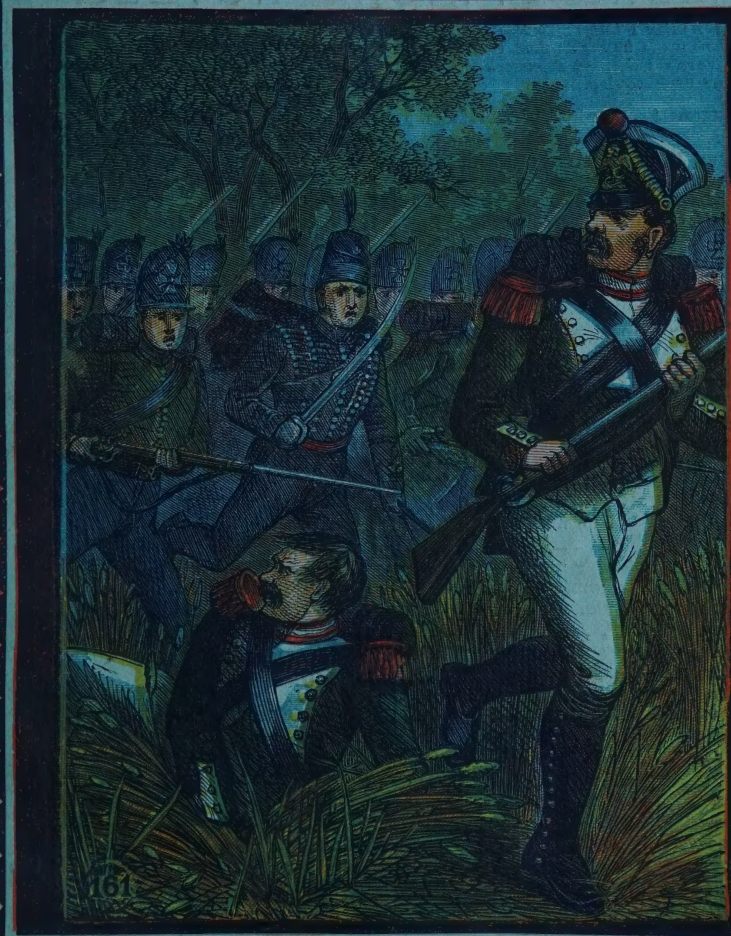
PRICE SIXPENCE.

AUTHOR'S EDITION

CAPTAIN BLAKE



W. H. MAXWELL

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

ROUTLEDGE'S
SIXPENNY NOVELS

WITHOUT ABRIDGMENT.

ROUTLEDGE'S 6d. EDITION OF
LORD LYTTON'S NOVELS.

The Author's Copyright Revised Edition, in which are given the latest revisions and corrections made by the Author, together with the Prefaces he wrote to the various Editions of his Novels published during his lifetime. No other 6d. Edition contains these Prefaces and Revisions.

132. Eugene Aram, with Three Prefaces.
133. Godolphin.
134. Last Days of Pompeii, with Two Prefaces.
135. Rienzi, with Dedication and Two Prefaces.
136. Ernest Maltravers, with a Preface.
137. Paul Clifford, with Two Prefaces.
138. Leila, Calderon the Courtier, and The Pilgrims of the Rhine, in One Volume.
139. Falkland and Zicci, with a Prefatory Note.
140. Pelham, with Dedication.
141. The Disowned, with a Preface.
142. Devereux, with a Preface.
143. Alice; or, The Mysteries. Sequel to "Ernest Maltravers."

NEW COPYRIGHT VOLUMES.

147. NIGHT AND MORNING.
148. ZANONI.

CHARLES DICKENS.—6d. each.

127. Pickwick Papers. Part 1.
128. Ditto. Part 2.
130. Nicholas Nickleby. Part 1.
131. Nicholas Nickleby. Part 2.
126. Oliver Twist.
125. Sketches by Boz.

HENRY FIELDING.—6d. each.

67. Tom Jones. Vol. 1.
68. Ditto. Vol. 2.
156. Joseph Andrews.
157. Amelia.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT.—6d. each.

151. Roderick Random.
154. Peregrine Pickle. Vol. 1.
155. Peregrine Pickle. Vol. 2.
158. Humphry Clinker.

W. H. MAXWELL.—Author's Edition —6d. each.

149. Stories of Waterloo.
150. The Bivouac: Stories of the Peninsular War.
161. Captain Blake.
162. Wild Sports of the West.

Captain MARRYAT.—6d. each.

94. Peter Simple.
95. The King's Own.
96. Newton Forster.
97. Jacob Faithful.
98. Frank Mildmay.
99. Pacha of Many Tales.
100. Japhet.
101. Midshipman Easy.
102. The Dog Fiend.
103. The Phantom Ship.
104. Olla Podrida.
105. The Poacher.
106. Percival Keene.
107. Monsieur Violet.
108. Rattlin, the Reefer.
109. Valerie.
123. The Pirate and the Three Cutters.

EUGENE SUE.—6d. each.

73. The Wandering Jew. Part 1 (The Transgression).
75. Ditto. Part 2 (The Chastisement).
76. Ditto. Part 3 (The Redemption).
78. The Mysteries of Paris. Part 1 (Morning)
79. Ditto. Part 2 (Noon).
80. Ditto. Part 3 (Night).

RB 23, 408

CAPTAIN BLAKE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Uniform in size and price.

STORIES OF WATERLOO.

THE BIVOUAC.

THE

ADVENTURES

OF

CAPTAIN BLAKE

OR

MY LIFE

BY

W. H. MAXWELL

AUTHOR OF "STORIES OF WATERLOO"

"*Sir Anthony.* Come here, sirrah! who the devil are you?
Captain Absolute. Faith! sir, I'm not quite clear myself; but I'll endeavour to recollect"

The Rivals

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
NEW YORK: 9, LAFAYETTE PLACE

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

INTRODUCTION.

"*Ægeon.* Why look you so strange on me. You know me well.
Ant. E I never saw you in my life till now."

Comedy of Errors.

I HAD been delicate from infancy—and the enervating effects of an unhealthy climate obliged me to retire upon half-pay, and quit Ceylon for England, to try if native air would restore a shattered constitution. I came to London for medical advice; and while my physician was anxious that I should continue immediately under his eye, he recommended me, for amusement and exercise, to make frequent excursions around the British capital.

No advice could have been more congenial to "a truant disposition." I, who had been buffeted about the world from my boyhood, willingly became a roamer after health; and in the vicinity of the metropolis there were few spots unvisited in the course of my valetudinary wanderings.

Every suburban retirement—every scene of holiday dissipation—every sign-board which a Cockney treasures in the tablet of his memory, is familiar to me. I have spent weeks upon the river and the road, became resident in steam-boats and stages, witnessed many an adventure, consorted with strange companions, and became extensively acquainted with the whole family of man.

It was a sultry day, and I was sitting in the bay-window of the Pier Hotel at Gravesend, contemplating the unceasing bustle that Father Thames presented. The steamer was to return to town at five, and I rang the bell to order dinner, and thus fill up an interval of two mortal hours. The gentleman of the napkin appeared, produced his *carte*, and eulogized the contents of the larder,—for there, as he averred, everything eatable in August would be found. He added, that dinner was just being served at the *table d'hôte* below; and probably, rather than dine *tout seul*, I would prefer uniting myself to the party. Undoubtedly I would. I seized my hat and cane, and following as true a descendant of Hal's "Francis," as ever "served a long lease to the clinking of pewter," entered the public room and joined the company.

The party amounted to a dozen, of whom a moiety were of the gentler sex. All, with one exception, were denizens of Cockayne and inhabitants of the Modern Babylon. They were all and every, no doubt, "good men and true;" of excellent reputation upon 'Change, and exemplary in their private relations; cherishing their wives, and correcting their children, as became citizens of character and credit. The ladies were fat and comely, and one of them positively handsome. She was a fine, joyous, laughter-loving dame, with teeth exquisitely white, and the blackest eyes in Bishopsgate Street. I saw her steal from beneath her pink silk bonnet an

espiègle glance at the stranger; and then, probably checked by the proximity of her liege lord, she turned her eyes demurely on the table-cloth.

Mr. Hopkins, when he espoused one so young and pretty as her of the pink bonnet, was certainly a bold man. He might easily have had an older daughter; and was moreover a short and bilious gentleman, neither in face nor figure designed by Nature for a lady-killer. If it be true that men in this life are sometimes by the agency of their helpmates qualified for a state of beatitude above, I should conclude, from the looks of his lady, that Mr. H. was certain of a place in heaven.

I mentioned that one of the party was a stranger to the rest. He was a tall, stout, devil-may-care, dark-whiskered fellow: I never heard a more decided brogue —I never met a wilder-looking gentleman. He was fashionably dressed, apparently on excellent terms with himself, and dying to be very intimate with the rest of the company. He placed himself *vis-à-vis* to the fair citizen; and, more than once, I detected a furtive glance stealing underneath the pink bonnet when Mr. Hopkins was otherwise engaged.

Dinner proceeded: the citizens ate gallantly—the stranger rattled on—graciously the pink dame smiled—and all were occupied according to their respective fancies. Mrs. Hopkins was indubitably "a fine animal;" but—may the Lord pardon her!—she used a knife with fish, and swilled "bottled stout" like a Life Guardsman.

When people are limited in time, it is marvellous how expeditiously they contrive to get on. I never met a company who drank fairer: sherry disappeared, brandy and *blue ruin* succeeded; the day was hot—the ladies thirsty: all had come out "on pleasure bent," and hilarity was the order of the day. Mr. Hopkins's cheek was losing its lemon tint insensibly, and acquiring the true *couleur de rose;* and I fancied that his wife's eyes every moment became blacker and brighter. Alas! it was a sun-gleam before a tempest. Suddenly, he bounded from his seat like a racket-ball, and, with a deep imprecation, declared vengeance against my next neighbour, the wild-looking gentleman.

Up rose the company *en masse.* They were all married, and therefore made common cause. There was a deceiver in the room—a Giovanni in the presence—for the stranger, not contented with looking "things unutterable," had actually attempted to establish a pedal communication with her of the pink bonnet; and, confound his awkwardness! he pressed the wrong foot.

It was unpardonable in the wild-looking gentleman. I felt for Mr. Hopkins. Had the delinquent trodden upon my toe, he would have been my destroyer; for I was afflicted with tight shoes and angry corns.

Never did a company appear more unanimous in denouncing a deceiver. At the audacious attempt the gentlemen were irate; and at the bungling execution the ladies were indignant—no wonder! If people will press feet, let them tread upon the right ones.

All and every assumed a hostile attitude, and assault and battery appeared to be the order of the day. An irritated drysalter from Tooley Street commenced buttoning his coat—and the whole corps seemed to be combining their efforts for a general onslaught.

Nor was the wild-looking gentleman insensible to coming events. I never saw a person more disinclined to submit quietly to martyrdom; and, seizing the poker, he bade a bold defiance to his assailants. The thickest skull has but a sorry chance against "cold iron;" and none of the angry citizens, although doubtless men of approved courage, volunteered to lead the assault. I took advantage of the lull, offered my mediation, and the stranger was permitted to explain. The offence

was perfectly accidental—a cramp caused the mischief—Mr. Hopkins was appeased, harmony restored, and a fresh supply of liquids promptly ordered and produced.

How long the armistice would continue unbroken, I did not pretend to guess. The steamer's bell sounded its note of preparation ; Cockneys by the dozen flocked on board ; the paddles revolved briskly, and I went splashing up to town, leaving the wild-looking gentleman to "complete his destinies."

Months passed ; autumn was over, and a murky atmosphere with drizzling rain told that it was a London November. I was returning from dinner to my lodgings, when, at the corner of a dark mews, I was hustled by several men, who commenced a simultaneous research into my pockets. Unluckily, I had that evening more cash upon my person than I felt inclined to part with, and accordingly offered a sturdy resistance. But it would have been unavailing, had not a stranger suddenly crossed the street and hurried to the rescue. He was indeed a powerful ally : down went a couple of the Philistines—off ran the rest, and I escaped spoliation. I turned to thank my deliverer, and in the stout stranger recognized my quondam friend, the wild-looking gentleman !

Nor had I been forgotten : he recognized my voice, tucked me under his arm, and we proceeded to a neighbouring tavern. We supped, and over a midnight glass I recalled to his memory the dinner at Gravesend, and asked him how he had subsequently progressed. He smiled, and informed me he had found favour in the sight of Mr. Hopkins, accompanied that party to town, and had been invited to visit them in Bishopsgate Street. In my opinion Mr. Hopkins was wrong.

We remained in conversation until a late hour. My friend was leaving London next day, but promised to find me out on his return. We separated, he having presented me with his card, on which was engraven "Captain John Blake."

Spring came, and I had heard nothing of my deliverer, when one morning, in *The Times*, I saw his marriage regularly gazetted ; and, joyful intelligence ! it was declared that the lady of his love was passing fair, and rich as an Israelite. After an elaborate account of the dresses and *déjeûné*, it was further intimated that the happy pair had returned to town, and were now resident at Ibbotson's. And had the wild-looking gentleman actually become a Benedict, and an heiress committed her happiness to his custody ? My curiosity was roused—I longed to learn the history of his good fortune from himself ; it would be but civil to offer my congratulations ; and, next day, I drove to Vere Street, and sent up my card.

My friend was out, but the servant informed me that his lady was *visible*. I was paraded to the drawing-room, announced as an old acquaintance, and found myself in the presence of the loveliest girl that ever vowed obedience at the altar.

I have during my march through life gazed on many a beauty, but never did I view a sweeter expression of artless loveliness, than the bride's face presented when she blushingly received my congratulations. In conversation she was easy and intelligent ; and before a quarter of an hour I came to the conclusion, that matrimony may be endured ; and that in the lottery of life the wild-looking gentleman possessed, as they say in Connaught, "the luck of thousands."

Our *tête-à-tête* was so agreeable, that time slipped on unnoticed. I heard the door unclose, and observed the bride's eyes lighten, as she said in a soft voice, "It is my husband." I sprang up to welcome my fortunate friend : but in a moment started back in dismay—I had caught a stranger by the hand, and intruded, under false pretences, upon the privacy of a gentleman to whom I was entirely unknown.

I never found myself in a more embarrassing situation, and attempted, of course a blundering apology, while the stranger politely requested me to sit down. It

was, indeed, a ridiculous mistake. In name and rank there was certainly a strange coincidence ; while, stranger still, in age and personal appearance, the Benedict of Ibbotson's might pass as twin brother to the admirer of Mrs. Hopkins.

I noticed this singularity.

"And may I ask," said the stranger, "where you met this duplicate of mine?"—I told him.

"How might he have been engaged on these occasions."—"On the first, in making love ; on the second, in thrashing pickpockets."

"I fancy I know your friend," said the stranger. "Would you favour me with the particulars of these adventures?"

I consented ; and during the recital he laughed immoderately, while the bride appeared to be equally amused.

"Well, sir," he observed, when my narrative was ended, "your acquaintance is in truth 'my loving cousin'—one who in name and resemblance is said to be my counterpart, but whom, I suppose either for sake of distinction, or from his superior vivacity, it has pleased his associates to designate as 'Jack the Devil.'"

I groaned ;—the identity was proven, and the *sobriquet* indubitably belonged to my worthy friend, the wild-looking gentleman.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, "how stupid and unpardonable must this intrusion of mine appear!"—"Far from it," said the bridegroom ; "I have heard of you repeatedly from my kinsman ; and Colonel ——'s name is quite familiar to Emily and me. Will you wave ceremony, and break our matrimonial *tête-à-tête?* and after dinner I will give you the last intelligence which has reached me of our excellent countryman, 'Jack the Devil!'"

Little inducement was requisite to make me accept his invitation ; and from that day, I date the commencement of a friendship that promises only to terminate with life. I have been for months together domesticated with my friends, and, during morning rides and evening potations, collected those details of personal adventure, which, *mutato nomine*, and with slight omissions, the following memoir so faithfully records.

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

MY BIRTH.

"*King Henry.* Is the queen delivered?
Say, ay; and of a boy.
Lady. Ay, ay, my liege;
And of a lovely boy."

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was a wild and blustrous night in the month of February, in the year of Grace one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine—The jail-clock struck one. My father's household had long since retired to their respective dormitories, and a solitary watch-light twinkled in the chamber-window where my mother slept. All was quiet as a regular sou'-wester would permit. Doors creaked, windows rattled, while the wind, eddying in hollow gusts through narrow lanes and gateways, came roaring awfully down the chimneys. There were no passengers abroad, for the foul weather had cleared the streets effectually of their usual gang of nocturnal wanderers; and the veriest drunkard appeared to have anticipated the storm, and managed to stagger home before the fury of the gale was at its height. The ancient elms which overhung the road leading from the barracks to the jail, groaned fearfully above the picket, as with great coats buttoned to their noses, they hurried to their guard-room from patrolling—the sentries kept snug within their boxes—and in all Castlebar but one man could have been discovered out of doors, and he, as it will appear, was a dead one.

Just then, a figure might have been observed moving hastily across my mother's chamber. Presently the bell rang; the warning peal was repeated; a loud and peremptory voice aroused the sleeping servants; and, without even waiting to bless himself, Mark Haggarty slipped on his red-plush breeches, tumbled over a turf-creel, which the housemaid, for better convenience, had judiciously laid across the passage, and as he gathered himself up, in tones which told how desperately he was alarmed, ejaculated, "Blessed Virgin! is the house coming down?"

"The mistress is ill," exclaimed my father. "Run for Doctor Donovan. Take the short way across the Mall, and be back again like lightning."

"Why then, by my own soul, I won't," returned he of the red-plush breeches. "*Me* crass the Mall, and Kimlin swinging on a tree! *Mona mondiaoul*,* if I would take a hatful of pound-notes and venture. But I'll cut round the lane and raise the doctor in a jiffy."

Accordingly, without waiting for his other habiliments, Mark Haggarty bolted out of the door, and started at a killing pace, upholding with his better hand the solitary garment by the waist-band.

Meanwhile the whole establishment was in general commotion. Half-a-score of domestics, male and female, in that interesting and unadorned state when beauty is said to be most bewitching, careered over the house, and tilted against each other in the lobbies. The men cursed, and the women crossed themselves; lights flared, dogs barked, boys kicked them for the same, and the uproar within beat the storm without all to nothing. At this moment Mark Haggarty returned "fairly kilt wid runnin'," to announce the advent of the doctor, so soon as Biddy Boyle, his favourite handmaiden, could manage "to shake him into his clothes."

Let critics say what they please, in the best biographies, digressions will be frequent; and even at this eventful period I must leave my mother to her fate, while I put my readers in possession of certain matters, which I deem necessary to illustrate and connect these memoirs.

Everybody who is aware that this history commences in 1799, will recollect that the rebellion had occurred during the preceding summer, and that although the insurrection had been suppressed, the country was still fearfully disturbed, and especially by ruffians who had been in arms with the disaffected, and who, having been excluded from mercy by their crimes, had still contrived to elude the hand of justice, and exist by terrorism and plunder. At this time martial-law was in full force; Denis Browne reigned in undisputed supremacy; his sway over the north-western division of the kingdom of Connaught was absolute, as if he had formed an integral fraction of the Holy Alliance; and his autocracy over "the finest peasantry on earth," not inferior even to that of Mr. Daniel O'Connell, whom God long preserve! With the persons and properties of his subjects Denis took occasional liberties, loosing and binding as he pleased—and when example was thought preferable to precept, hanging a delinquent "out of the face," for the general benefit of the body politic. True it is, that in after days, shortsighted politicians have questioned the utility of the gallows, and even mooted the authority of the defunct Denis to employ it as he did. But these important questions are not for us to decide, and we shall consign them accordingly to the future historian.

Three days before the opening of this story, an occurrence took place which procured for the worthy citizens of Castlebar the unexpected pleasure of witnessing an execution. An outlaw named Kimlin, who had escaped the general slaughter which visited the rebel allies when the

* An Irish imprecation.

French surrendered at Ballinamuck, had infested the country for the last winter at the head of a numerous and ferocious band. He was a daring, desperate scoundrel—and, rendered confident by his previous success in evading the many attempts that had been made to arrest him, imprudently ventured within a short distance of the town, and appeared at a bridal dance which was given in a neighbouring village. As a reward of one hundred pounds had been offered for his apprehension, it is not surprising that his propinquity to the town was speedily communicated, and a few of the yeomanry, having ascertained the house where he would harbour for the night, marched hastily to the spot, and surrounded and attacked it. Although surprised, Kimlin made a desperate resistance; the leader of the party was shot through the heart, two others severely wounded, and it was not until the house was in flames and the outlaw's ammunition expended, that he could be overpowered and secured. Tied upon a car, with the dead yeoman placed beside him, Kimlin was conveyed by his captors in triumph to Castlebar. The party proceeded directly with their prisoner to the court-house, where Denis Browne was at the moment sitting in judgment upon a broken head incurred at a recent hurling match.

When the important event was communicated to the autocrat of Mayo, that the felon who had evaded pursuit so long was at last within his power, the hurlers, plaintiff and defendant, were most unceremoniously ejected from the bar of justice. Kimlin, pinioned and guarded by a yeoman with a naked bayonet at either side, was placed at the foot of the table, directly opposite to the arm-chair where Denis Browne was seated; the dead body was deposited outside in the lobby; and one of the captors desired to state briefly the particulars of the morning adventure.

While this ceremony was proceeding, Kimlin, with a dogged resolution, listened in sullen silence to his accuser. The detail ended, Denis turning upon the undaunted felon a look that would have quailed the stoutest heart, demanded to know the names and haunts of his companions. But the robber spoke not, and met the eye of his judge with a scowl of deadly hatred.

"Dost thou hear me, ruffian? Answer at once, and truly, or before the sun is at its height you shall dangle on yonder tree," and he pointed to a tall elm, whose bare and jagged boughs were visible from the court-house window.

Kimlin looked up; it was a look that united fiendish scorn with unflinching desperation.

"Not so fast, Right Honourable,"* said the robber with a sneer; "you'll bring me to the drum-head, I suppose, at any rate—and, with all your hurry, you'll scarcely strap me up till sunset. As to my comrades, they are who they are; and for their haunts, why, look till ye find them, and then you'll not have lost the labour."

The judge smiled bitterly. "Think ye, friend," he replied, "that a murderer and armed rebel, with the blood of the king's trusty soldiers on his hands, shall cumber the earth till he undergoes the forms of law intended for better regulated subjects?" He paused, and taking out his watch, examined the dial attentively, and whispered to the jailor beside him, who directly left the room; then, in a voice as cold and passionless as if he was ordering his carriage to the door, he thus continued: "Kimlin, it wants five minutes to eleven; at twelve you dangle upon yonder elm," and he pointed with his finger to the tree.

"Devil may care!" replied the undaunted ruffian; "will you let me have a priest?"

His wish was granted, and a messenger despatched for the confessor. In a few minutes, and by different doors, two functionaries entered the chamber, and placed themselves at either side of the doomed murderer.

The first of these was an old grey-haired man, whose coat of dingy black, and long coarse horse-skin boots, announced him to be a travelling friar. He crossed himself while addressing the prisoner, and muttered to him from time to time some Latin formulæ, interspersed with admonitory observations, inculcating the necessity of speedy repentance, and the making of his peace with God.

The other was a very different personage. He was a tall negro, with a face of amazing ugliness, and frame of gigantic proportions. His dress was of that peculiar and remarkable costume with which the time-beaters in military bands are generally invested. He had large rings in his ears, and a crooked sabre at his side, while his turban or cap, formed of red and yellow calico, added at least eighteen inches to his height. But, striking as his dress and figure were, on one thing the undivided observation of the spectators was directed—and that was a small coil of rope which he carried in his hand, having one end simply knotted, while the other was provided with an eye, spliced with a neatness that told the negro had been once a sailor.

"Sambo," said the judge, with an encouraging nod, "we require a cast of your craft this morning; and, like a good and provident workman, you have not forgotten your tools."

The negro's lips divided, and his grin disclosed a set of teeth firm and white as the tusks of a boar-hound.

"Hegh, massa! me always ready; but rope has broke a strand;" and, pointing out the frayed part, he directed a careless look to the convict, who had retired to a corner with the confessor—"Me want new rope; him there not tall, but dam heavy."

"It will do, Sambo—it will do," said the justice, with a smile.

"But," returned the executioner, "Massa Browne, me not paid last job. Him jailor there, him dam rogue; him promise a one pound-note, besides the clothes."

"Ay, Snowball," replied the accused, "and did ye not get every rag that Conolly had on, with everything in the pockets, and that into the bargain!"

"Hegh, hegh!" and the sable functionary grinned; "great matter that! Him had not'ing in him pocket but thread and thimble; him clothes not worth a broken drum-stick—all tore, though himself was a tailor. Besides, this here a dam place. No one will buy dead man's clothes for fear him ghost come at night to claim them:" and Sambo laughed heartily, in which the judge and jailor joined.

While this conversation was carried on at the table, the felon and the churchman were busily employed in the corner of the room. Between religious exercises, the friar was endeavouring to

* The title by which Denis was universally known.

extract a confession, which Kimlin appeared to make reluctantly, as his replies were given in hasty and querulous tones.

"Did I not tell ye I was there already?" was his answer to the priest's question.

Again the friar whispered—"No," returned the convict, "Conner, that was hung in Foxford, fired the shot that killed him."

"Who murdered Peter Donovan?" said the confessor.

"How do I know? I was in Roscommon the night it happened."

"You fired at Mr. O'Roark," observed the priest.

"Well, if I did, I missed him—and more's the pity."

"Were you not at Marley's robbery?" asked the friar.

"Arrah! ye bother one wid questionin'—I was, and I'll tell ye no more!"

"Well, attend to me," replied the friar; "are ye sorry for your crimes, and do ye heartily repent?"

"I'll tell ye what I repint most," said the villain with a ferocious oath; "and that is, that I hadn't more cartridges, and, by ——, I would have shot as many of them blood-hounds," and he pointed to the yeomen, "as would have covered that table, and it's a long one—and, now will ye give me the rites?"

"I'll give you *the rope!*" exclaimed the judge, who had overheard the sanguinary declaration—"away with him at once; and before twelve strikes, let me see him strapped up!"

Immediately the captors seized the prisoner, and the black drummer resumed the coil, which he had deposited on the table.

"Massa Browne," said the sable artist, "mind, two poun' due now; me come back for money when the job done—me have child to cristin—him beauty—black as a crow—colour of him father—him beauty:" and Sambo showed his white tusks as he laughed heartily. At the door the convict paused, turned on the judge a look of undying hatred—"may my curse light upon you and yours, Denis Browne!" he ejaculated; then clinching his teeth together, without murmuring another word, he doggedly accompanied his escort.

The look and imprecation were not lost on the person to whom they were addressed. They produced no other effect, however, than eliciting a bitter and sarcastic smile; and in ten minutes, Denis Browne was calmly contemplating from his window the agonised struggles of the expiring robber.

It was determined that the body should be suspended for several days, as a wholesome example to the "mauvais sujets" of the neighbourhood; and, accordingly, a manifesto to that effect was issued by the "Right Honourable." Aware that Kimlin's gang were in the vicinity of the town, and that they would naturally wish to remove their deceased leader, precautionary measures were adopted to protect the corpse against any attempt at abstraction. As the Mall was directly opposite the jail, of course the fatal tree was visible to the sentries round the prison. It was, therefore, intimated to the guard, that Mr. Kimlin was placed under their especial *surveillance*, and that to the living criminals beneath their charge they had received the addition of a dead one.

Three days passed, and everything went on as usual. Mayo was minus a robber, and Sambo richer by two pound-notes and a suit of clothes. Kimlin ceased to be a lion—the maid-servants were tired of admiring him—and there was not a nurse for miles around, who had not gratified her infant charge with an exhibition of the departed murderer. To Sambo alone the sight was still an interesting one, and this was from a pardonable vanity. Every evening, at tattoo, while exercising the large drum, as he passed underneath the tree that bore his handy-work, he grinned as he looked up, and remarked to the mulatto who operated on the tambourine beside him, "Hegh, Bill, him robber well hung; dam good hemp too, or two strands would never hold so big a villain up:" and his vigorous stick would descend with additional force upon the sheep-skin. Enough for example had now been done; and it was decided that, on the next day, Kimlin should be committed to his mother earth.

We have already described the evening as stormy. At midnight the gale was awful, and the sentries, as they peered from their boxes, could occasionally observe through the gloom, the body of the dead outlaw oscillating wildly back and forward in every blast of wind. Within the prison, the jail-guard were circled round a blazing turf fire; yet it was in truth a cold and dreary watch; and Sergeant O'Tool feeling an unusual chilliness of the stomach, dispatched Private Rafferty to procure some whisky to correct the same, precisely at the moment when the accoucheur departed from his house, hurrying to the assistance of my mother.

Now, Doctor Donovan was well skilled in pharmacy and obstetrics—but moreover, he was an adept in freemasonry, and a worthy professor of that ancient and honourable craft. That night he had presided over "the enlightened few," and whether obnubilated by the arcana of the mysterious science, confused by Mark Haggarty's alarm, or bothered by the storm, he could never himself discover; but certain it is, that totally oblivious of Mr. Kimlin being suspended in the Mall, he took the short cut, which he of the red-plush breeches had so judiciously avoided.

Before the doctor sallied forth, Biddy Chalk, to the best of her abilities, endeavoured to secure him against the inclemency of the weather. She encased him in a large coat; his face was defended to the very eyes by a shawl; a silk bandana, tied below his chin, prevented his hat from levanting; while a horseman's cloak over all, appeared to set the tempest at defiance.

While the doctor continued under the shelter of the houses, he progressed gallantly, but the corner turned, he then experienced the fury of the gale. Short and corpulent, he presented a square and compact surface to the action of the wind, which, being in nautical *parlance*, "right aft," hurried him along with astonishing velocity. He had reached the centre of the trees, when a squall raised the capes of his cloak suddenly. To stop was impossible. Hoodwinked, he was impelled forward, till striking against a tree, he endeavoured to arrest his course by catching at it. In the attempt he grasped an object—it was a man's leg! Before he could relinquish his hold, a heavy body bore him to the earth, and the dead murderer lay over him.

Private Rafferty succeeded in his mission, having

procured a bottle of "the native" for the especial comfort of his commander. Crossing an angle of the Mall, he cast a hasty glance towards the spot where Kimlin had buffeted the storm, and vainly strained his vision to assure himself that the person of the outlaw was secure. No opaque form, however, presented itself in the partial moonlight. "Holy Virgin! can this be possible?" he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes anew; but the branch that "bore the weight of Antony" was bare and unadorned as any of its kindred boughs. Pat Rafferty, albeit as stout a sentinel "as ever called stand to a true man," was no hero where a dead one was concerned; he was just as contiguous to the departed patriot as his fancy would require, and accordingly contenting himself with a distant "reconnaissance," he proceeded to the guard-room to deliver at the same time his whisky and tidings to the superior officer.

"Cead fealteagh!"* exclaimed Sergeant O'Tool, as he eyed the bottle in his comrade's hand: "I never needed a drap so badly, for I feel as if I had swallowed a snow-ball: give us a galliogue, Patshiene;"† and presenting a glass, it was filled and discussed with marvellous celerity. "That puts life in a man. Phew! there's a squall! Fresh hands at the bellows, gintlemen. What a swing Kimlin got!"

"The devil a swing," replied the bottle-holder, turning down a bumper in imitation of his worthy commander: "Kimlin has bate a retrate, as sure as my name is Pat Rafferty."

"Death an nouns! asy with yee'r jokes," exclaimed the gallant sergeant.

"Jokes! By this book"—and here he pressed the bottle reverently to his lips—"there's not a rag of him on the tree, more than I'm there."

"*Mona mondiaoul!*" said the sergeant, "we're ruined, horse and foot! Corporal, *avourneein*,‡ run for the sake of Jasus—take a squint outside, and tell us what ye see."

Short was the corporal's absence; and when he returned, the fatal news was certified.

"Och, murder!" said Mr. O'Tool; "the Right Hanarable will hang us every mother sowl! Come along some of ye;" and seizing a lantern, which he lighted, off ran the sergeant, followed by five or six files of the jail-guard.

It was a fortunate circumstance for the unlucky accoucheur that the descent of Mr. Kimlin had been so speedily discovered; and great was the astonishment of Sergeant O'Tool, when he found that in the place of one body, he had a second to account for.

"Blood and thunder, boys! where did this one drap from? Why, this 'bates Bannagher.'" A groan interrupted him. "Mother of God! which of thim was that?" and he crossed himself. "Hold the light down. Why, this one's alive! Hallo! dacent man, who the divil are ye? Lord, how wild he looks! Phew! I comprehend it; he was stalin the corpse. Arrah, bad manners to ye—I've done worse before now than put the baynit through your carcass." Another long and hollow groan succeeded. "He's dacently dressed too, the thief of the world! Lift him;" and by main force the doctor was raised to a perpendicular. "What have ye to say, ye divil, for this attimpt—Sorra take ye, wantin to rob the Right Hanarable—Arrah, who the blazes are ye?"

But before the sergeant could be answered, a recruit lifted the lantern and scrutinized the features of the supposed culprit.

"Holy St. Patrick! can this be Doctor Donovan?" A feeble affirmative was groaned out.

"Oh, thin, it's a larkin ye were, doctor?" said the sergeant. "Arrah, for shame, to pull the crature about, after the tassin and tumblin he has underwint these three days. Go to your warm bed—it's no night for a steady little man like you to be out upon the batter. Help him home some of ye; for, by my conscience, whether it's fear or liquor, the devil a leg the man can lay before the other."

With considerable difficulty Doctor Donovan was carried by the soldiers to his own house, just as Mark Haggarty arrived a second time, to hurry him to attend my mother. One glance at the unlucky accoucheur, satisfied him of the red-plush breeches, that he must seek assistance elsewhere. Having heard a brief and confused narrative of the accident from the guard, Mark hastened back to my father, who was pacing the hall impatiently.

"Is he coming?" asked the latter.

"He's kilt," was the reply. "My curse attend ye, Kimlin!"

Dreadful was the consternation which Mark Haggarty's intelligence created: all and every, from the cook to the kitchen-maid, crossed themselves devoutly, and aves and paternosters were plentifully ejaculated. And while the butler was despatched to rouse the regimental surgeon, and my father was striving to conjecture by what ingenious device a dead man had contrived to finish a living one, the old nurse-tender shouted from the stair-head that my mother had produced an heir, "and, och, but he's a born beauty!"

Gentle reader, such were the circumstances attendant on my *entrée* into life; for the nurse's beauty was myself, your humble servant.

CHAPTER II.

MEMOIR OF MY FATHER.

"Says the priest to my parents, Ye ugly ould pair,
Arrah, where could you get such a beautiful heir!"
Irish Ballad.

How strictly the latter part of this admired distich might have been applicable to myself, modesty will prevent me insinuating; but certainly the former was not so to my parents, for both were young and handsome.

Cæsar Blake (for thus my father was designated) was the descendant of an ancient family, and the youngest of four brothers. The eldest succeeded to ancestral dignities and estates, and had been duly indoctrinated in fox-hunting and field-sports, electioneering, drinking, and duelling; in short, in all those accomplishments which from time immemorial have been considered by the best authorities the sole end for which Irish gentlemen were originally created. The second was a field-officer in the Austrian service. The third held a command in the Spanish marine. The fourth, my father, entered the British army when a boy, where he attained the rank of major.

Cæsar Blake was a general favourite with his

* A word of welcome.
† Anglice, "A glass-full, Pat."
‡ Corporal, darling.

regiment, which, though a flashy corps, was in no way remarkable for strictness in its discipline. The men were chiefly Irish, and consequently there were among them not a few of that description known among soldiers by the title of "the king's bad bargains." The officers were young, wild, and gentlemanly. The colonel, an easy-tempered, good-hearted, hard-drinking veteran, averse to all manner of severity, and of course obnoxious to being imposed upon by the men. Hence the regiment was frequently in scrapes—the officers perpetrating all sorts of mischief, and the men fighting with any who would so far oblige them. Complaints being eternally forwarded to the general of the district, at last the case came under serious consideration at the Horse Guards; and to abate the evil, it was deemed advisable to remove the old commander, and replace him with a tartar.

But from his previous services, there was no small difficulty in depriving Colonel Selby of his regiment. Fortunately a staff appointment became vacant, and Colonel Macleod was gazetted to the command of the 18th "vice Selby promoted."

The veteran parted from his companions in arms with unfeigned regret. To the senior officers he was endeared by many a recollection of "Auld lang Syne;" and on the younger he looked with the feelings of a too indulgent father, who forgives juvenile aberrations he should correct, from a mistaken but excusable affection. "My dear boys," he said, as on the morning of his departure he addressed himself to a group of wild ones, among whom my father was a leader—"be more upon your guard. Remember it is not the 'old man' with whom you will have to deal in future. Others may not make allowances for the exuberance of youthful spirits. Be cautious, my darling boys, and when I'm far away, recollect my parting admonition." They did so before long, as the sequel will demonstrate.

Colonel Selby intended quitting the barracks by the back-gate, for his heart was too full to permit his looking at the regiment for the last time with tolerable composure. The men were formed on parade, while their beloved commander was observed issuing from his quarters, leaning on my father's arm. Then a singular scene of military excitement ensued. The soldiers piled their arms, and rushed forward in one wild tumultuary mass. A chair was procured, and the colonel elevated on the shoulders of the tallest of the grenadiers. The band formed in front, and followed by the whole corps, officers and drumboys, lightbobs and pioneers, women and children, and all the tag-rag and bobtail appertaining to a regiment, they proceeded in glorious confusion round the streets, and passed the inn with deafening cheers, just as the old man's successor stepped from a hackney-chaise.

Whether it was that no enthusiastic tokens of regret had marked the new commander's parting with the regiment he had quitted, certain it is, that this public demonstration of attachment to his predecessor did not operate favourably on his temper, when afterwards receiving the complimentary visits of his new companions. He was a hard, weather-beaten, thin, tall, bilious Scotsman, who had passed every gradation of service from a drum-boy to the command. He was a teasing martinet, and an unforgiving disciplinarian. A constitutional harshness in temper and appearance was so remarkable, that an Irish corporal, in describing him to a comrade, declared that "he was cut out of a crab-tree, while the carpenter, to get all the knots in the stick, had kept as near the root as possible."

It so happened that an elderly gentlewoman of some property, who had never been seduced into matrimony, resided in the town. She was a personage of goodly size, great hospitality, and inveterate devotion at the card-table. Shortly before Colonel Selby's departure, a feud had broken out between this lady and some juniors of the regiment. She loved loo—they patronised country dancing—and at her last fête, taking umbrage at the obstinacy with which she rejected the introduction of a fiddle, they unceremoniously left the room, declaring one and all, that they would stand loo no longer.

This was bad enough in all conscience; but here the delinquency did not end. Unfortunately, in their "exit in a huff," they passed the supper room. The door was open, the servants otherwise engaged, and the table already covered. This was a tempting sight certainly, and it was hard, at that late hour, to retire fasting. A consultation ensued. To return upstairs was determined to be "infra dignitatem," to depart supperless a thing not to be tolerated. The course of action was soon decided—one seized a ham, another chose a turkey, my father adopted a chicken-pie, and a fourth selected a cooper of port. None departed empty-handed; and so rapidly was the larceny effected, that the delinquents were quietly refreshing themselves with the abstracted property, and taking their ease in the next inn, before the astonished mistress of the house was advertised, that the better moiety of her entertainment had departed with her rebellious guests.

Deep was the indignation of the hostess. She, one of the Macnamaras of Clare, to be treated with incivility, and that, too, in her own house, was

> "To beard the lion in his den,
> The Douglas in his hall!"

That night she never closed an eye, and early next morning indited a letter to her kinsman, Captain Antony O'Dogherty, quondam of the Buffs, to require that he should exact due satisfaction for the injury, and take immediate vengeance on the persons of the offenders. But on reflection, she recollected that honest Anthony's pistol-hand had been already damaged in action; and even were he in full force, he was but one man, and what was that among so many. Legal redress came next under consideration, and her solicitor, Billy Davock, was consulted in form.

Billy was a short, punchy little man, wore a light-coloured scratch-wig, took brown snuff, and was reputed the best opinion in cases of assault and battery, "this side of Dublin." He heard the story attentively, took a long and deliberative pinch of high-toast, shook his head, and requested to have the advantage of a night's reflection—for which he subsequently introduced an item in his bill, under the denomination of "loss of sleep, 13*s.* 4*d.*"

Next morning, Billy Davock visited his fair

client right early. He had turned the case over attentively; and flagrant as it was, he nevertheless admitted that doubts and dubitations had arisen. Great caution would be necessary in framing the indictment. If Major Cæsar Blake, whom might the Lord mend! was charged in the counts with stealing the ham he would escape condign punishment, if he, the major, could satisfy the jury that he had merely purloined the turkey. Beside, the delinquents might prove an alibi. By the evidence of the company she, Miss Macnamara, it is true, might establish the fact of the said Cæsar, with the others named in the indictment, having been on her premises the night of the larceny. But then the barrack-guard would swear anything they were directed by their officers, as a matter of course. Consequently they, the defendants, would prove by the affidavits of a sergeant, corporal, and twelve privates, that they had never left the mess-room. If the prosecution failed, the traversers would have a good action for defamation and loss of character, and heavy damages would be recovered. Under these perplexing circumstances, he, Billy Davock, would advise a case to be submitted to counsel; and he would accordingly, if his client so instructed him, take the opinion of certain persons, whom he enumerated as being learned in the law.

But, on mature consideration, Miss Macnamara, alarmed at the complexity of the case, abandoned all hope of legal redress. She had, she discovered, but one safe remedy against the parties, and that was their eternal exclusion from her card and supper tables.

It is to be lamented that this merciful determination of the injured gentlewoman did not operate upon the offenders as it should. Whether it was that, hardened by impunity or piqued because at the next entertainment their names were not found among those bidden to the feast, does not appear; but certain it is, that having discussed an additional quantity of old port, they "suadente diabolo," sallied out at midnight, to concert and carry on measures of retaliation upon the already sinned against Miss Macnamara.

The house of this persecuted lady was situate in the centre of the town; yet being, what is in Connaught termed, "a lone woman," to preserve property and person it behoved her to have her domicile well secured. Accordingly, the lower windows were defended by iron stanchions that effectually prevented ingress to or egress from the mansion. Of this the conspirators took advantage, they screwed gimlets silently into the door-posts, front and rear, lashed them together by a stout cord, and thus Miss Macnamara and her guests were illegally deprived of liberty.

This effected, a slater's ladder was procured from an adjacent yard, a horse-sheet saturated with water, and one of the party, who had been formerly in the navy, mounting the roof, clambered to the chimney-top, and effectually choked the funnel by stuffing it with the wet cloth.

All within the mansion was joy and revelry; supper had ended, and it was, as all admitted, excellent and extensive enough to have made amply up for the spoliation of its predecessor. The gentlemen were indulging in brandy punch, and the ladies refreshing themselves with port wine negus. Miss Macnamara, having "cleaned out" the company at loo, was of course in glorious spirits; and Colonel Macleod, who occupied the post of honour beside the hostess, apparently infected by the general hilarity, twisted his saturnine features into what he intended for a smile. A probationer from Maynooth had just favoured the revellers with that celebrated drinking song, entitled, "Jolly mortals, fill your glasses," and a *débutante* from Mrs. Mac Greal's finishing school at Cloonakilty, was arranging her mouth to execute "Will you come to the bower?"—ladies laughed, gentlemen pinched them beneath the table-cloth, fun was the order of the night, care might go and hang himself,

"And all went merry as a marriage bell!"

Just then a long continuous volume of dense smoke came rolling down the chimney; "Murder!" cried the chief attendant. "Bad luck to them thieves, the sweeps! they promised to have been here a week ago." Puff, puff, puff, went the chimney. "Raise the windows!" exclaimed the hostess, who happened to be constitutionally *thick*-winded. Puff, puff, puff—"Holy Virgin! I'm smothered!" ejaculated Captain O'Dowd, who had recently returned to his native town, with a confirmed asthma and increased pension. Puff, puff, puff—"Open the hall door!" roared the priest.

"It's fastened without."

Puff, puff—"Try the back one, for the love of heaven!"

"It won't open."

The consternation was awful; the company hurried from the supper-room; and the colonel, who, from a pulmonary infirmity, was necessitated to make a rapid retreat, having inserted his spurs in the table-cloth, removed it, glasses and all, without the assistance of the servants. Death appeared inevitable, and the only reasonable doubt was, whether the coroner would attribute it to fright or suffocation. That nicer etiquette, which in ordinary cases prohibits interviews in bedchambers to all ladies and gentlemen who have not been joined in holy wedlock, was now disregarded, and sufferers of both sexes might have been discovered in all departments of the establishment, in search of a more endurable atmosphere. At that moment of general distress, a voice from the street exclaimed, "The top of the morning to you, mother Macnamara! Will ye give us 'Jolly mortals' again, if you please."

"It's them thieves of the world from the barrack!" exclaimed the butler. "Open the door and let us out, or, by the eternal frost, I'll sware my life agin yees in the mornin'!" But equally vain would have been threats or solicitations on the blockading party, had not several lanterns been seen approaching. Off the delinquents scampered, leaving their deliverance from captivity to be achieved by the domestics of the *détenu*, who fortunately were at hand.

If Miss Sally Macnamara was mortally offended at this daring attempt upon the lives and liberties of her loo party, Colonel Macleod was not less incensed at having been confined by his own corps, and smoked by them with as scanty ceremony as they would have extended to a badger. The delinquents were threatened with courts-martial by the commander, and apprised that law proceedings were instituted for false imprisonment by Billy Davock, who, unfortunately for them, had been amongst the number of the sufferers.

The parting admonition of the old colonel

was now painfully recollected ; and, too late, the wild youths discovered that his successor was one of different mould. To some, the consequences of their mad exploit would have been ruinous ; and, undervaluing the result, or calculating with false security on superior rank to shield him, my father generously took the blame upon himself, and became responsible alone for the late foray against the spinster. True, that by this course he exposed himself to the wrath of Antony O'Dogherty, with every asthmatic loo-player in the town ; but this was of minor import to one who more than once had "burned powder." After much diplomacy and letter-writing, it was intimated as a *sine quâ non*, that a public apology was required, and this my father peremptorily refused. A formal complaint was in consequence transmitted to the general of the district ; and the result was, that to Major Cæsar Blake it was officially notified that he had the option to retire from the regiment, or stand a court-martial. Irritated at his colonel's conduct in the transaction, my father chose the former alternative, and at the early age of twenty-four he left the service in disgust—a major upon half-pay.

Turned adrift upon the world, the major's first impulse would have determined him to join his second brother, who held a military command in Germany, but an incident had already decided the future career of my unlucky and light-hearted parent.

It happened that, during the preceding spring, when the 18th were quartered in Manchester, my father had obtained a short leave of absence to run up to London, and in the stage-coach accidentally encountered a gentleman and his daughter, to whom during the journey he contrived in some way to be serviceable. The lady was returning from a watering-place, whither she had accompanied her father. She was very young, very pretty, and very romantic ; and it would have been extraordinary indeed, if the marked attentions of the handsome traveller should have escaped her observation. The major at first sight was exceedingly enamoured. He was, however, no Romeo, but a firm believer in that leading axiom of a soldier's creed, that he is bound, as a point of duty, "to love all that is lovely, and all that he can"—and at that time he was unfortunately a pluralist in flirtations, having three affairs to occupy his leisure, and each of them important ones too. The old gentleman was shy and repulsive, as his daughter was winning and unsuspicious ; and for the greater portion of the journey, the former eschewed all approximation towards companionship. Still the constant and gentlemanly attention of his fellow-traveller could not be entirely disregarded ; and when his carriage met the stage, he interchanged cards with the polite passenger, and gave him an invitation to visit him when returning from the metropolis. While with jealous care the old traveller watched the transfer of his luggage, the young ones were taking a hasty farewell, and, I suspect, a tender one. Ellen Harrison departed deep in love, and for the two next stages, my father was silent and melancholy as a Trappist.

How long the fit would have continued is uncertain ; but, fortunately for his peace of mind, a young dress-maker joined the coach in Coventry. He was thinking on his absent love—the soft seductive eye—the glance, downcast and furtive —the rosy lip—the flushing cheek, were all affectionately recalled ; and that artless look at parting, so silent and so eloquent—lingering and loving, as it stole from beneath her silken lashes, while the carriages were being separated. He sighed heavily ; and how could he help it? The sigh was responded by a gentle suspiration. He glanced hastily at his solitary companion, and a lightning look from the blackest eyes in Coventry met his ! She too, poor soul, was a sentimentalist. She had parted from her lover in a pet ; and, God knows, that was enough to make any tender-hearted gentlewoman unhappy. Was it wonderful' then, that two afflicted beings, *tête-à-tête* in a stage-coach, should approximate in their distresses? Would it be pardonable in an Irish major of foot to encourage solitary melancholy, with the prettiest corset-maker in Coventry to console and be consoled? Could my father emulate Saint Senanus of frigid memory, and be enfilated by the fire of an eye, "soft, floating, dark," which would have puzzled that holy man to have resisted? No—he did endeavour to solace his suffering companion—gradually Miss Minchin recovered her serenity ; and when the Manchester Rocket stopped at the White Horse Cellar in Piccadilly, and the travellers departed in a hackney-coach, so tenderly did the gallant major enfold his fair friend in his military roquelaure, that *the cad* declared they were indubitably a newly-married couple, while the coachman averred upon his conscience, that the lady must be a runaway wife, "because the Irish gentleman was so very attentive ; and every one knew that they preferred anybody's to their own."

Whether it was that Miss Minchin's black eyes operated as a counter-charm to Miss Harrison's blue one, I cannot say, but my father nearly managed to forget her ; and yet circumstances did occasionally recall her to his memory. One morning, a nameless billet brought him a beautiful ringlet of light brown hair. Whose was it? It was puzzling, but he did not think the event worth the trouble of investigation. The truth was, the major was a lady-killer, *billet doux* were no novelties to him, and ringlets reached him by every post, as various in their colours as the tints of the rainbow.

His removal from his regiment also created a general sensation. He had an extensive military connection, and had been a favourite in the different towns where he had been quartered with his corps. Wildness, if the offender be well-looking, is a venial crime in woman's eyes ; therefore the dashing major was considered a proper subject for female sympathy. Colonel Macleod was universally disliked, consequently Cæsar Blake was declared by his male acquaintances an injured man—and they resolved unanimously that it was a hard case to lose one's commission for stuffing an old maid's chimney with a wet horse-cloth. No wonder, then, that my father, commiserated by both sexes, bore his misfortunes bravely ; and when he returned to his brother's at Castle Blake, and Connaught cousins to the third and fourth generation rose *en masse* to welcome him in genuine obsolete Irish hospitality, every regret was banished, and the ex-major was as happy as fox-hunting and cock-shooting, dancing, and drinking, could make him.

Yet at times, and it was natural enough, old

recollections would cause a sigh. At his brother's jovial board, the memory of the mess-table would obtrude itself; and even in the merriest dance, other balls and other beauties would pass in "shadowy review." Sometimes he contrasted the rival belles who now besieged him with his absent loves, and the result was not favourable. Harriette Kirwan, "the Cynthia of the minute," was a glorious, joyous, unsophisticated madcap. All with her was natural and unstudied, whether she sailed through the mazes of a country-dance, or rode with masculine intrepidity to the fastest foxhounds in the county, her light green habit and veil, like a streamer behind, "floating loose as mountain breezes." But Harriette's spirits were at times too exuberant—and when once she flogged a shepherd for letting a field-gate close against the counter of her thorough-bred mare, my father shuddered at this amazonian feat, and felt afraid lest in the married estate this passion for the horsewhip might continue, and in connubial discussion, if all other arguments failed, the devil might tempt her, as a last resource, to try what virtue lay in flagellation.

Such was Cæsar Blake's state of feeling, when a letter addressed to him, bearing an English post-mark, was left upon the breakfast-table. The handwriting of the direction, and the motto and device upon the seal, told that his correspondent was a female. Harriette Kirwan's eyes flashed while she observed the colour rise upon my father's cheek, as he perused the fair one's billet; and when he rose suddenly and left the room, and afterwards, under some light pretext, declined riding with her to make a morning call in the neighbourhood, her jealousy was confirmed; for Harriette loved him.

The letter that interested the major so much, ran thus :—

"I hardly know in what terms to address you. Still I feel the effort must be made, and that too without farther preface. During many, many months, I have indulged the cherished expectation of seeing you again. You promised this at parting, and I have clung to the hope, until to hope longer would be foolish.

"I address you with diffidence; for, in doing so, perhaps I shall incur your contempt. But even that I must risk; and more I can scarcely suffer than I have already done from concealed anguish and suspense.

"If I overstep the barrier prescribed by custom to my sex, do not judge of me unfavourably. She who does so, has nothing but the purity of her motives to console her. If she errs, she errs from principle; and while she knows the act may be indelicate, she proudly feels that her honour is stainless as your own.

"When I met you, Blake, my heart had never felt any attachment, nor owned warmer impressions than those which natural affections produce. Since then, one object has haunted my imagination—I have thought of you, prayed for you, dreamed of you. If this open and undisguised expression of my feelings offend, I shall be sufficiently punished by your indifference. I have no other fear; I confide my secret to a soldier—my confidence is not misplaced, and I implicitly rely on your silence with regard to this communication.

"I may have done wrong in encouraging fancies, which in maturer age I should have known were improper. I may be deemed by you a silly and romantic girl; but this confession would not have been made—this weakness exposed—had not circumstances rendered a disclosure, otherwise indelicate, now, on my part, an imperious duty.

"Blake—Oh! that I dare add the epithet my heart suggests—I am addressed by one in every respect my equal: and he is encouraged by my only parent. I cannot love him; my hand he may obtain, but he will have no heart to accompany it. Would I not be wrong, would I not be criminal did I plight my troth to him at the altar of my God, when my thoughts by day, my dreams by night, wander to another?

"With bitter anguish I observed that, for some trifling misunderstanding with your commanding officer, you had in pique retired from the regiment. I know nothing of the causes; it is enough for me that you retired with unblemished honour. How far your circumstances may be affected by the professional misfortune I cannot conjecture; but—why does my cheek glow—why does my hand tremble—why blush at the avowal?—if my small fortune should be an object, it is freely, entirely yours. Would that I could win your heart; mine, alas! is all your own.

"Blake—dear, dear Blake—pardon this madness. Alas! I know not what to do: I have no sister to console, no mother to direct me. My father loves me; but he is stern and cold—I dare not confide in him—his very look would kill me. Will you come to me? Ah! no; seas probably divide us: but write to me, dear Blake. If your heart is another's, in mercy tell me so: that cruelty will be kindness; then must I tear your image from my heart, though the effort break it.

"Farewell, *dear*, *dear* Blake. I feel that I have taken a fearful step, and suspense will now be insupportable. If I knew that to love you would be hopeless, vain, criminal, I might forget you. Be candid with me, and if your affections are not for me, still pity the weakness of a woman, and think favourably of one, who, were it permitted, would be thine, and thine for ever. *Dearest*, adieu! "E. H."

"Stainsbury Park."

The effect of this letter upon my father was decisive. The young, and beautiful, and artless Ellen loved him! This was not the passion that lives but in the sunshine, and, when the horizon is overcast, droops and dies. Ah, no: when gay, courted, and *distingué*, she loved him, but she loved in secret; but when fortune frowned—when youthful indiscretion exposed him to consequences that might have been fatal to his future prospects—"when every tongue his follies named," then, with a devotion that seemed romantic—the timid girl disclosed her latent passion, and took the outcast to her heart. Was not this love—deep, enduring, ingenuous love?—and Cæsar Blake's determination was instantly formed to start without delay for Stainsbury.

Thus resolving, he had insensibly wandered through the shrubbery, and, following a by-path, found himself in a coppice which overhung a small lake, some distance from the hall. Flinging himself upon a fallen tree, he perused again the letter of his artless and devoted mistress. "I

shall not waste an hour," he said aloud, conscious that in this remote place none could overhear his soliloquy. "Yes, Ellen, quick as winds and distance will admit, I will prove how securely you have placed your love, and how fond and ardent its return shall be." He pressed the letter to his lips—replaced it carefully in his bosom—rose to commence preparation for an immediate departure, when a deep sigh startled him. Hastily he looked round, and Harriette Kirwan stood beside him.

Wild, reckless, and impetuous, she watched from her window the direction he had taken when he left the house. Maddened by jealousy—agitated with the tempest of her passions, without any definite object to direct her, she determined to risk an interview. She quickly followed him, while, unconscious that he was observed, my father took the very path which, above all others, he should have shunned.

Her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes alarmed him; her bonnet was carelessly thrown back, and her magnificent dark hair escaping overspread her neck and shoulders.

"Gracious God!" exclaimed my father, "has anything alarmed you, Harriette?" She was silent for some time, till bursting into a passionate flood of tears, she sobbed hysterically. Her astonished companion seated her on the fallen oak, and placed himself beside her. "Harriette, for Heaven's sake, compose yourself; what has occurred?" Still no reply. "Dear Harriette, can I assist, can I relieve you?" No answer yet. "Speak to me—tell me what distresses you—you know, Harriette, I have no cousin I love so well as you."

"And do you love me?" she exclaimed with animation, as she turned her wild and delighted eyes upon his. "Oh, Cæsar, say so again!—say you *do* love me, and I shall be then too happy!"

"Dear Harriette,"—and my father made an awkward and embarrassing pause—"you know I ever loved you as a sister."

"As a sister!" and she pouted sullenly; "a sister's is not the love I feel towards you: Cæsar, I cannot live. Unless you let me love you fondly, warmly, ardently, as a woman loves, I shall die!" and she flung her arms round him, and hid her burning face upon his breast.

My father was fearfully agitated. He, young, impetuous, and unreflecting—the undisguised passion of one so dangerously beautiful as Harriette Kirwan, might have wrought their mutual ruin. She hung upon his bosom, her eyes swimming with tears; and when he strove to calm her agitated spirits, and reason with her coolly, his lips unluckily met hers, and a fervid kiss of those impassioned lips interrupted, alas! the philosophic homily he had prepared himself to deliver.

It was indeed for both a trying moment: beautiful arms were wound around him, and looks, dark and lustrous, turned passionately upon his;—eyes that required the direct intervention of a patron saint to disarm—that none but an anchorite could resist—that an Irish gentleman should more especially avoid, as

> "He that knows
> His heart is weak, to Heaven should pray
> To guard him against looks like those."

Just then a noise was heard—a red setter burst through the copse—a woodcock flushed—a gun exploded, and breaking the hazel boughs above their heads, the dead bird fell at my father's foot. Instantly, hurrying his dangerous cousin along the path, before the sportsman could reload, the major and his companion were clear of the shrubbery, and directing their steps to the house by the open carriage-drive.

It may be conjectured that the soldier carefully avoided another *tête-à-tête*. Harriette, mistaking the cause of my father's agitation, during their morning interview, ascribed it to very different feelings, and indulging in hopes groundless and delusory, prepared to follow up her success. But the major, like an able commander, would leave nothing to chance, and had determined on retreating without "beat of drum." Secretly, therefore, orders of readiness were issued to Denis O'Brien, whom he had "purchased out" when he left the 18th. The baggage was packed without parade; and before daylight next morning, while the blooming Harriette dreamed of her dashing kinsman, the false commander was levanting upon the coach-box of the Galway mail, with Denis and a brown portmanteau on the roof, the valet lilting an Irish song, and the master "blowing a comfortable cloud," with as much indifference as if they had bidden a ceremonious farewell to all in Castle Blake, "nor left a breaking heart behind."

It would be irrelevant to notice the fair one's rage when the departure of Cæsar Blake was first announced. In her chamber, she gave vent to feelings that were wild and tempestuous enough. Meanwhile the beloved one was posting to her favoured rival. The wind blew favourably, and the distance lessened—until, on the fifth evening, by the light of a splendid moon, the major drove into the remote village, adjacent to which the mansion and domain of Mr. Harrison lay.

CHAPTER III.

THE CROSS KEYS, AND THE INTERVIEW.

"It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard;
It is the hour when lovers' vows
Seem sweet in every whisper'd word;—
And gentle winds, and waters near,
Make music to the lonely ear.
Each flower the dews have lightly wet,
And in the sky the stars are met,
And on the wave is deeper blue,
And on the leaf a browner hue,
And in the heaven that clear obscure,
So softly dark, and darkly pure,
Which follows the decline of day,
As twilight melts beneath the moon away.

"But it is not to list to the waterfall,
That Parasina leaves her hall;
And it is not to gaze on the heavenly light,
That the lady walks in the shadow of night;
And if she sits in Este's bower,
'Tis not for the sake of its full-blown flower;
She listens, but not for the nightingale,
Though her ear expects as soft a tale.
There glides a step through the foliage thick,
And her cheek grows pale, and her heart beats quick;
There whispers a voice through the rustling leaves,
And her blush returns, and her bosom heaves;
A moment more, and they shall meet—
'Tis past—her lover's at her feet!"

PARASINA.

THE Cross Keys at Stainsbury was one of those comfortable country inns, which the experienced

traveller prefers to the noisier houses of public accommodation that are to be found in larger places. It was "a low snug dwelling, and in good repair," flanked on one side by an extensive row of stabling, and on the other by a crowded stackyard. In front appeared a well cropped garden, with its flower-knots, and apiary, and close-cut hedges. There was a general neatness out of doors which told "mine host" was no sloven: within, everything was orderly and scrupulously clean; and when the traveller looked at the well-appointed parlour, he could not but contrast it with the dirty, dreary, rackety caravanseras, which even the best of the Hibernian hostels at that time were.

The arrival of the gallant major occasioned some bustle among the household of the Cross Keys. The soldier having now reached the scene of action, settled himself before the cheerful wood fire to arrange his plans for opening the campaign, by communicating his arrival to his "lady love." This, as it was the first, would probably be the most difficult movement—a failure would be fatal, and, therefore, due caution must be exercised. In Denis O'Brien he had an efficient and devoted ally, and, barring blunders, never did a more accomplished valet assist in the abstraction of an heiress. Denis had a bold heart, a stout arm, a ready wit, and brass enough to qualify for a London footman; but he had his failings, and these were an inveterate brogue, an unquenchable thirst, and an aversion to a cool argument, which sometimes induced him to strike first, and reason afterwards.

While my father was ruminating upon his plans, the table had been covered with a snowy cloth, and other necessary appendages for his immediate refreshment. Whether hunger or love had rendered his perceptions less acute than ordinary, I cannot say, but as he sate in moody silence, beating the "devil's tattoo" upon his boot, and gazing on the fire, the landlord's handsome daughter had visited and left the apartment thrice, without being noticed by the guest. This insensibility of the stranger piqued the *demoiselle*, who determined to interrupt his meditations.—"Did you order wine, sir?" she said, poking her pretty face over my father's shoulder. But the traveller continued tapping the metal stove with the point of his cane. "Sir—sir, are you asleep, or at your prayers?" and she lightly touched his arm. My father raised his eyes carelessly, and they encountered a pair of as brilliant hazel ones as ever undid a devotee.

"Now, Heaven pardon you," said the traveller, "I had just made resolutions against temptation, and you come here to overset them."

"Sir—sir, for shame; how could you kiss one so, and the window open?"

"Well, child, and who's to blame for that? Draw the curtains, and we'll talk about the wine. I'm so modest! it's a failing, I know—but who is faultless?"

"Modest! are you an Irishman?"

"Yes, pretty one, sit down upon my knee, and I'll give you all the particulars of my birth, parentage, and education."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed the young attendant. "Gallant sir, have I ever seen that modest face before? Nay, I am not near-sighted, and am just as safe with the table between us. Have I had the honour of travelling in company with a crusty old man, a beautiful girl, and a most impertinent major, who, while the honest gentleman was engaged in attending to his trunks, did not neglect that opportunity, to bestow his parting benediction on the lips of the blushing daughter?"

"Now, who the deuce are you?" cried the soldier. "Speak, or I'll jump over the table and kiss you to death upon the spot!"

"What a desperado the man must be!" said the maid of the inn. "Shall I tell a tale that happened not a hundred years ago. Once upon a time, a young lady went to a watering-place with her papa, and a cross papa he was. The day before she left home, her maid took a fancy to get married, and what was to be done? She could not get a servant, and persuaded her nurse's daughter to be her attendant for the time. On the return of the lady by the stage (for papa would not travel as other people do, in their own carriages), unfortunately a tall, impudent, well-looking Irish major was a fellow-passenger. Argus-eyed as the old man was, the soldier out-manœuvred him—persuaded the poor girl that she was in love, and in that belief she has since continued. Now, the attendant was not blind; she saw from behind the carriage that, while papa was rummaging the boot, the major was kissing his daughter, while he placed an emerald ring upon her finger, which ring the silly girl has worn next her heart since they parted."

"Stop! you have my secret.—Am I safe—may I place confidence in you, my pretty one?"

"Listen," she replied, "and you will best judge. My father and mother were fellow-servants at the hall, which they left upon their marriage. This inn and farm belong to Mr. Harrison, and when they became vacant he placed my parents here. Soon afterwards, Miss Ellen's mother died in giving her birth, and the charge and nursing of the pretty orphan were entrusted to mine. Never did sister love another better than I do her. I know how her affections are disposed of. If she weds to please her father, her misery for life is certain. If she weds to please herself, she will be deserted and disinherited; for there lives not a more unbending and unrelenting parent than hers. She has, it is true, a fortune in her own right, which none can control; but to all else (and her father's power over his estates is absolute) let her bid adieu. You, sir, have no trifling difficulties to surmount. You must be prompt, and at the same time, cautious. Beyond a day or two, here you cannot remain unknown and undiscovered. If a suspicion arises, you and Ellen are separated for ever. My father is devoted to his master. Take care of him. But what errand brought you here? What reason can you assign for stopping at an obscure inn, and at a remote village? You cannot pass for a farmer, or a bagman, or a horse-dealer, or anything connected with an honest calling. That military swagger and impudent look, and the mad Irishman who accompanies you, would at once betray your cut-throat trade. The fellow was scarcely in the house before he squabbled with the exciseman, and tumbled the dairy-maid about as if he had known her for a twelvemonth. Pray, what business brought you here?"

"Upon my conscience, my dear girl, that's a poser!" returned my father.

"I have it—here—read this," and Phœbe handed the major a country paper, while a loud voice called to her from without, to say that dinner was ready; and when she left the room, my father perused the advertisement.

It was a sale of horses, the property of a departed fox-hunter, who lived a few miles from Stainsbury; and they were, as the newspaper announced, to come in a few days "unreservedly to the hammer." This was indeed a lucky event; and the major decided, that to buy horses should be his errand, and that he would accommodate himself during his sojourn at the Cross Keys, with the name of an old friend in the Enniskillen dragoons, at present quartered at Ipswich. Mr. O'Brien was quickly summoned; and before Phœbe re-entered with dinner, Denis was fully instructed in the object of their visit to the inn, and cautioned, moreover, to abstain from disorganising dairy-maids and quarrelling with excisemen.

When dinner was removed, as Phœbe laid the wine upon the table, she addressed the major in an under voice—

"Fortune favours you to-night. A monthly club, of which my father is a member, meets at the Red Lion, on the other side of the bridge. This will remove a very troublesome and inquisitive neighbour for the evening, and enable me to apprise Miss Ellen of your arrival, which, without rousing his suspicions, I could scarcely have ventured to have done at this late hour. But hark! I hear the keeper's voice in the kitchen, and from him I may probably ascertain how the folks at the hall are occupied." So saying, she left the room.

Nor was she long absent; and on her return there was an excitement in look and manner, that told her to be the bearer of important news.

"Everything favours you, gallant sir. There is a party of gentlemen at the hall. Mr. Harrison will be of course engaged with his company, and Miss Ellen most probably in the drawing-room or her own chamber. If this be the case, you shall in person announce your arrival. Attend to me. The window is low; open the lattice, step gently out, turn round the corner of the stables, and you will find yourself in a narrow lane: it leads to a wicket in the park-wall, for which I have a key. Wait for me there, and keep close under the hedge, lest your figure be discovered by the moonlight. I will join you speedily; and I shall send your servant in to close the casement after you have passed through it.

My father was a daring, devil-may-care fellow, and quickly as events hurried on, he was all ready for action. Denis was duly apprised of the intended expedition, admonished to be on the alert, and to be sure to keep his mouth close, and ears and eyes open. My father put on his hat, filled a bumper, and pointing to the decanter, intimated that Mr. O'Brien might follow the example. "Here's luck," said the master, as the wine disappeared; "Amen," responded the attendant; and next moment the major stepped gingerly out, and Denis closed the lattice.

Never was there a sweeter night to spirit a lady off, or achieve other feats, to which the garish light of day is supposed to be unfavourable. Following the directions of his pretty guide, the major easily found out the path and reached the wicket. Denis remained upon the *qui vive*, visited the parlour with fuel, and appeared to be in close attendance on his master, while Phœbe departed for the hall with a parcel, which fortunately had arrived by the evening stage, and which she stoutly declared to be an article of paramount importance, requiring an immediate delivery. All was ably executed; and in a quarter of an hour Cæsar Blake found himself safe within the park walls that enclosed his gentle mistress. Phœbe conducted him by a private walk to the rear of the mansion, and ensconced him in a clump of evergreens, while she proceeded to execute her embassy.

It was quite evident that the whole establishment of the hall had ample occupation. The noise of joyous revelry reached the major in his ambuscade. Lights flashed across the passages, and figures appeared and vanished. The opposite wing of the building was the scene of the evening festivity. Thence the noises came, and there the windows were illuminated; while those before which the concealed soldier was posted were lighted only by the moon, and unfrequented by any of the revellers.

While my father listened and looked from his ambuscade, a solitary figure appeared at the window immediately before him, and by the stream of moonlight it was evidently a female form. To judge from her attitude, she was no sharer in the general festivity; for she rested her head against the casement, and seemed absorbed in sombre meditations. Was it Ellen? The figure was fuller and taller than his pretty mistress: but this alteration a year might have effected. Should he venture to attract the attention of the solitary fair one? It was hazardous: it might be one of the domestics; a discovery would undo him, and he determined to leave all to fate and Phœbe. Nor was he wrong; in a few minutes a second form was visible, and the dress and figure announced it to be his guide.

Brief as the dialogue was that ensued, the major watched for its termination with impatience. The action of the parties apprised him, that his proximity was being communicated by the maid of the inn. He observed the taller figure fling her arms round her companion's neck; he saw the casement open; he heard his own name softly whispered. Bounding from his concealment, he approached—passed through the window and pressed to his bosom his beloved and beautiful mistress.

Joy and terror prevented Ellen Harrison from speaking; and while my father supported her to a sofa, Phœbe, like a prudent sentinel, took care to secure the door, and bolt out all intruders. Poor Ellen was completely overpowered by conflicting passions, as the soldier covered her lips with kisses, and plighted his ardent love.—"Oh! can you, will you pardon me, dear, dear Blake? Was it not wrong in me to write so boldly?"

The major pressed her still closer to his heart.—"Oh, no; my best beloved! that candour has bound me to you for ever! But time flies, and every moment is precious! Wilt thou fly with me, Ellen?—*me!* a discarded soldier? Wilt thou share my humble lot, while rank and wealth are at your refusal."

"Yes; my own love! all will I give up for thee—thou wouldst not deceive me! I, who trust all—yours I am, and yours for ever!"

How long this lover-like rhapsodising might have been continued, those who have experienced the tender passion can best determine. To Phœbe it appeared necessary to interrupt it, and accordingly she approached the sofa—

"Come, gallant major—Is this a time for heroics? There is one not far distant who, did he but suspect the present *tête-à-tête*, I fear would be rude enough to make one of the party. Surely, between this and Gretna there is many a long mile, and you will have ample time to bill and coo upon the journey. Come, Miss Ellen, the major must march. Give her one parting kiss. Lord! did I tell you to give her twenty?"

The arguments of the *soubrette* were too just to admit of disputation. In a few minutes the necessary arrangements for an elopement on the next night were completed, and my mother agreed to leave her home for ever, and share the fortunes of one almost a stranger.

Favoured by the occupation of the household, the major and his handsome guide retreated from the enemy's cantonments without observation, and reached the Cross Keys safely. Phœbe stole in by the back-door unnoticed, while her companion halted in front of the caravansera, to reconnoitre the premises before he would attempt a re-entry by the casement.

There was no cause of suspicion, however, that either his absence, or that of "the maid of the inn," had been remarked. The major peeped through the lattice of the kitchen, and the appearance of the company was satisfactory. A glorious fire blazed within, where, on chairs and settles, divers guests were seen comfortably refreshing themselves. One, and the most prominent of the group, stood before the fire, and in him the major had no difficulty in recognising his own worthy attendant, Mr. Denis O'Brien. He appeared to be at the moment undergoing a very searching examination, relative to his own and his master's motives for visiting the good town of Stainsbury; and to judge by that portion of the colloquy which the latter overheard, the interlocutor, as the Scotch call it, had small reason to plume himself upon the result of his inquisition.

"And it is to buy horses your master is come here?" said a short, red-nosed personage, directing a fiery grey eye upon the valet.—"It's yourself may say that, with your own purty mouth," replied Denis O'Brien.

"What does he want them for?" said the gentleman with the red nose.—"Just to keep his feet from the pavement," returned Denis.

"Is he a dealer, or a coach-master?" asked ferret-eye.

Denis whistled a few bars of a song,—"He's only a dragoon, jewel, and they take an oath at Highgate, niver to walk when they have a horse, and prefer riding into the bargain;" and he lilted up the butt-end of a ballad—

"Says the judge, you must bundle to Botany Bay;
My lord, then, says Bob, I won't walk the whole way.
Singing, Dig e dum di, dum dee!"

"You are an Irishman," continued the querist,—"pray what part of Ireland are you from?"—"'Pon my soul!" replied Mr. O'Brien, "you will oblige me particularly by telling me what part of it I'm not from?" and he sung—

"I courted in Cavan, play'd cards in Ardee,
Kiss'd the maid in Dromore, and broke glass in Tralee;
I married in Sligo, got drunk at Arboe,
And what's that to any one, whether or no?

"Is your master married?" said the stout stranger.—"If he's not, he's fairly promised," was the reply.

"Pray, what family does he belong to? for I was some time in Ireland," rejoined he with the red nose.—"What family?" repeated Denis O'Brien; "arrah, is it joking ye are? He's a true discindint of the kings of Connaught, and blood-relation to every Burke, Blake, and Bodkin, from Loughrea to Limerick—

'I lave my pate to Darby Tate,
My face to the O'Gradys:
And I lave my legs to Daniel Begs,
To shake among the ladies.
Singing modereen roo, a roo, a roo.'

—And now that I think of it, I'll go and see whether he wants more fire;" and Mr. O'Brien swaggered out, leaving the stout gentleman rather dissatisfied with his information, much of which, by the bye, he suspected to be apocryphal.

Nothing could have been more successful than the opening of the campaign. Luck was certainly on my father's side, and "luck," Mr. O'Brien averred, "was everything." Before he retired for the night, the major held a cabinet council with his friend Phœbe, and it was then and there determined that, to elude suspicion, he should leave the Cross Keys next day, proceed to the next town, there remain *perdu* till evening, provide a carriage, return at midnight, and, with the assistance of his fair ally, enter the park and bear away his mistress.

All this was accordingly put in train. Denis received orders of readiness; and by eleven o'clock next morning, the major and his man were on the road, after taking an affectionate farewell of the landlord and the curious gentleman with the red nose.

Allerton was but eight miles distant, and there my father established his head-quarters. The day, "big with the fate" of my parents, wore heavily through. The major was uncomfortable, and so was the major's man—for Denis was on duty; and when on duty, Denis, from military habitude, dispensed with the comforts of the bottle, to which on other occasions it was his fancy to apply.

Time kept moving, evening came on apace, and the weather, threatening since morning, hourly grew worse. The wind rose, the rain fell sharply against the casement, as the cold shower was driven on by frequent gusts. The moon was hidden behind an impenetrable mass of clouds, and night fell with all that could render it dreary and unpropitious.

My father and his man Denis were not free from those superstitious fancies to which the natives of the "land of saints" are generally prone; and both, in private, drew from this elemental change, sinister auguries touching the success of their nocturnal expedition.

Eight, nine, ten, pealed from the town-clock. My father roused himself for action, and Denis fortified his person "again harm" by turning down a full bumper of cogniac. A bill was called, a post-chaise ordered round instanter; and while Mr. O'Brien saw his effects duly deposited in the carriage, the major carefully

examined the loading of his pistols. At half-past ten the master and man ascended the vehicle, and, to the astonishment of the household of the Black Bull, drove from that comfortable house of accommodation, upon a night when a Christian would not reject the dog of his enemy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ELOPEMENT.

"Oh, lady, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour."
Scotch Song.

"Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower:
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
By all the operations of the orbs,
From whom we do exist, and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever."
SHAKSPEARE.

IT was not until the travellers had cleared the streets of Allerton that they were fully aware of the dreary drive before them. The night was pitch-dark, the carriage unprovided with lamps, while through the leafless hedgerows the wind howled mournfully. How different was this from the preceding evening—all then so calm and bright and exhilarating. It was—

"But the daylight sick,
Looking a little paler."

Notwithstanding the difficulty attendant upon driving over intricate cross-roads, they reached their destination in safety, and while the carriage was placed at a convenient distance from the park-gate, the steeple-clock of Stainsbury struck twelve.

At the Cross Keys the inmates had retired to rest. The signboard creaked in the breeze; the mastiff was sleeping before the kitchen fire; the hostler was snoring in his crib; and the dairy-maid dreaming of new ribands, and the next fair. There was but one waking, and that one was the pretty Phœbe. My father approached the casement silently, where, to direct him, a flickering light was visible. His tap was answered promptly; the maid of the inn appeared, dressed and ready to accompany him; and, as the window was low the gallant major received her in his arms, and deposited her safely on the ground.

"Laws!" said the *soubrette*, archly. "I should suppose on this occasion you had no kisses to dispose of. But hush!—we must be silent. I am half afraid to venture, for I am certain Mr. Harrison's keepers are afoot. There has been sad havoc lately among the pheasants, and the squire is outrageous, and determined to detect the poachers. Little does he imagine, while he is intent only on preserving game, that it would be far more necessary for him to protect his daughter. His keepers were drinking at the tap this evening, with three or four discharged soldiers whom he has hired as assistants. Are we not a daring party to venture to the house at midnight? But, major, I was so frightened after you left us this morning. You were scarcely clear of the village, before came down that nasty fellow with the red nose, whom you saw at the bar when you were bidding me good-bye. And Lord! he did so question me about you. Well, when he was gone some time, the squire himself rode up to the door, and called out father. What passed I cannot guess, but the conversation was very earnest, and I half-imagined that I overheard your name. Yet, if Miss Ellen has been prudent, and made preparations for her journey without creating suspicion, we can have little to fear. God grant we may not be interrupted! a failure now would ruin your hopes and her happiness."

While Phœbe was speaking, the party, notwithstanding the extreme darkness, reached the wicket and unlocked the door, and advancing cautiously through the shrubbery, halted at the clump of evergreens which had sheltered the gallant major on the preceding evening.

Their vigil was a short one. In a few minutes the drawing-room window opened, and a figure was indistinctly seen. My father stepped silently from his ambuscade. "Ellen, my own loved Ellen!" he murmured.—"I am ready, dear Blake," replied a sweet voice, whose smothered sobs told how fearfully she was agitated.

"Haste, gentle love!" said the enamoured soldier, as he received the trembling girl in his arms, and pressed her to his bosom tenderly.

"Arrah! *bedershin.** No love-making, major dear, if you plase, at present," said Mr. O'Brien as he shouldered a trunk.

"On, gallant sir," whispered Phœbe, who took possession of a dressing-case, while the lover passed his arm for support around the beautiful refugee, and endeavoured to assure her that all danger was at an end. And so thought Denis O'Brien.

"Come along, Phaybe, my jewel!" he exclaimed to his fair companion. "Would ye turn the light of yeer eye, if ye plase, upon the path, for a darker night a man niver marched on. Holy Patrick!" he continued, "it's yourself that stood our friend. They may talk of St. George and St. Denis—and he's my own blessed name-sake; but Patrick, *awourneein*, give me yourself at a pinch against the calendar. By all that's beautiful, you're the dacentist saint that ever a sinner crooked a leg to!"

"Silence!" said my father, interrupting this ebullition of pious gratitude. "In a few minutes, my Ellen, we will be secure from all pursuit. Forward!"

"Stop!" thundered a loud voice, as five or six men sprang from the evergreens where they had been concealed, and threw themselves upon the refugees. An instant scuffle succeeded. The women shrieked; Denis asked no questions, but pitched away the trunk, and hit down two of the assailants, while his master prostrated the man who seized him, and shook himself by a powerful exertion clear of a second opponent. Ellen clung to her lover's arm; and though she impeded his efforts at defence, her presence protected him from the violence of the attacking party, who appeared to turn their chief vengeance against the unlucky attendant. But Denis, to use the parlance of "the fancy," was "a troublesome customer." He was not a person to be easily overpowered. Many a hard knock he received, and to all he made a conscientious

* Anglicé, Be quiet!

return. His earlier accomplishments in hurling and foot-ball were not in this extremity forgotten. He was reputed in Connaught to be "mighty handy with the foot"—the darkness was favourable to the exercise of this talent; and it was rather difficult to decide whether the feet or the fists of Mr. O'Brien were most efficient.

While the man was offering a desperate resistance, the master's hot temper fired at this attempt to arrest him. To rob him of his mistress, was to rend the deer from the tiger.

"Stand off!" he cried, with a deep imprecation, "or I'll make ghosts of some of you!"

"Lay hold of him!" responded the voice of one, who seemed the leader of the rest.

Ellen clung wildly to her lover's arm, for one of them had grasped her cloak, and he drew a pistol from his bosom.

"Now, by my soul's hope," he exclaimed, "the first man that lays a finger on the lady is a corpse!" Daunted by the determination with which it was apparent the lover would protect his mistress, the men fell back save one, and he grappled at the major. "Ha, fellow! wilt thou cross me? Lift but a finger, and I drive a bullet through your heart!" and he pressed the muzzle of the weapon against the stranger's breast. But Ellen shrieked——

"Oh! stop—hold your hand—it is—*it is* my father!"

"Nay, fear not, my love. Stand back, sir! Unhand my servant, fellows—What would you with us?"

"Give up your arms," said the leader.—"When I give up my life, and not till then," was the reply.

"Surrender!" exclaimed the father of Ellen.

"Oh do, dear, dear Blake—'tis madness to resist," cried the fainting girl.

"What, and lose thee? Never!"

"You will not lose me," she said in a low firm tone; "none shall separate us now."

"We will accompany you, sir," said my father, addressing Mr. Harrison: "walk on, we follow;" and the major uncocked and returned the pistol to his breast, and supporting Ellen, he entered the mansion of her father; Mr. O'Brien following in durance vile, while Phœbe brought up the rear, in the close custody of one of the keepers.

Mr. Harrison, when they entered the hall, called loudly for lights, which he ordered to be placed in the dining-room. Danger, imminent, inevitable danger, has, it is asserted, sometimes changed the coward to a hero, and the extraordinary events of this night, had a singular effect upon the youthful and timid maiden. Aware that there was no alternative left but a decided assertion of free will, she determined to brave the worst consequences of parental anger, and dare the denunciation of her father's eternal displeasure. Her lover felt the gentle pressure of her arm against his; he turned his eyes, still flashing with excitement, upon those of his gentle companion, and he read there a look of confiding love and meek determination.

"You will not leave me, Blake?—Will any thing induce you to give me up?" she said, in a soft and entreating tone.

Her lover pressed her hand.

"Sooner, Ellen, shall my heart's blood colour the floor I stand on!" and regardless of the presence of an angry father, he bent his lips to hers. Mr. Harrison noticed it; he turned pale as death, but controlled his feelings. The servant returning, announced that the dining-room was lighted.

"Have the kindness, sir and madam, to follow me," he said coldly, "and let the other prisoners stop here."

"Prisoners!—we're no prisoners," exclaimed Mr. Denis O'Brien. "Phaybe, darlin, don't mind him; we're only what they call upon parole, and that manes that we'll nather smash heads nor brake windows, but just go quiet and asy. Arrah! honour bright, ould gentleman; or say the word, and by Jasus we'll fight it over again." But his master gave a signal which the valet appeared to comprehend. "Oh, I see—it's to settle terms of surrender, as we used to say in Holland. Some of ye, and the divil speed yeer manners! might have handed one a drop of drink, after the tossing and tumbling we had without. *Mona mondiaoul!* if iver I was so flustered with an insignified skrimmage; I'm as hot as if I had been at the clearing of a pattern."

"Bring the fellow some ale," said the master of the house; and while Denis was left to discuss a tankard, his master, with the "old man's daughter" on his arm, was ushered into the lighted chamber.

The scene was an uncommon one. Mr. Harrison settled himself coolly in his accustomed arm-chair; the soldier firmly confronted him, while Ellen, half sinking with terror and dismay, clung to him heavily for support. There was on her father's countenance a cold, and withering, and passionless resolution, which augured badly for his offending child, if any hope had remained of pardon. He scanned the major over from head to foot, and read in the bold and reckless bearing of his daughter's lover that before him was an unbending spirit that neither present threats nor future consequences could waver for a moment. He glanced at his only child, and, momentary as the look was, upon both the effect was powerful. A paleness covered his face which had before been flushed with subdued passion, while Ellen quivered like an aspen in the breeze. The lover noticed her distress. There was wine upon the table, and filling a glass, he carried it to her lips—an effort of which agitation rendered herself incapable. Several minutes passed in silence: at last the old gentleman spoke.

"Your name, sir?" he said, addressing my father, whom he continued to question.—"Cæsar Blake."

"Your country?"—"An Irishman."

"Your calling?"—"A soldier."

"Your rank?"—"A major upon half-pay."

"I seldom notice military matters, but I believe you were lately removed from your regiment: may I ask for what crime?"—"For none: I took upon myself the consequences of a youthful folly which others were engaged in, and to whom the results might have been ruinous."

"What was the offence, then?"—"Covering a chimney with a horse-cloth."

"Humph!—a sensible exploit. Have you any means?"—"But small ones."

"Name them."—"Regimental half-pay, and one hundred a year from my brother."

"What brought you here to-night?"—"To carry off your daughter."

"You are lovers, it would appear, and she was cognisant of the design. How was your intrigue carried on?"—"You must use a more correct term if you expect a reply from me."

"Humph!—well, courtship be it."—"I met her in the stage-coach by accident—loved her, wooed her, won her."

"You have achieved a wondrous conquest, as you imagine?"—"I think so; I have won one that will make me happy."

"Will you wed her against my wish?"—"Most assuredly, if Ellen will consent."

"Did you point a pistol at my breast to-night?"—"I did."

"Was it loaded?"—"Yes, with a brace of bulllets."

"Would you have shot me?"—"Certainly, had you persevered in detaining me, and I been unapprised by Ellen who you were."

"Who is the cut-throat who accompanies you?"—I presume you mean my servant."

"Who is the quean who roams through private parks at midnight with idle renegades?"—"She is no quean, nor I a renegade."

"Oh, your pardon!" was replied sarcastically. "Well, who is that modest gentlewoman whom we found among the bushes?"—"Daughter to the landlord of the Cross Keys."

"Ho-ho! am I then betrayed by my own servants and dependents."—"Certainly not: he of the Keys knew nothing of the attempt."

"And you will marry my daughter, although I peremptorily forbid it?"—"I have already answered you."

"Enough, sir."

He rose from his chair, filled a glass of wine, drank it, took two or three turns across the chamber, then seating himself, fixed a searching and unmoved look upon his trembling daughter.

"Ellen," he said in a low and tremulous tone, that might either be occasioned by anger or affection—"Ellen, attend to me, for it is probable that this is the last time I may address you. How is it that I find you, regardless of the duty you owe to me as your natural protector—regardless of brilliant prospects of rank and opulence, which in your own country, and among your own connections, you may realise when you please? How comes it that duty and interest are alike abandoned, and that you sacrifice all to share the shattered fortunes of a disbanded soldier, and, for aught you and I can tell, a profligate and a beggar?"

My father's cheek reddened, his eye blazed, his blood boiled, and it was easy to observe that there was a volcano labouring in his breast that required but small additional insult to explode.

"You cling to him," continued Mr. Harrison—"*him*, the acquaintance of some hours, and you leave *me*. Well, be it so. I shall ask you but a few questions: take heed, weak girl, for on your answers it depends, whether I shall pardon your disobedience, receive you as my child, proclaim you as my heiress, or cast you from me a worthless and repudiated daughter. Hear me!—You have five thousand pounds when at age, to which none can gainsay your right; I, if you are deserving, will leave you twelve thousand pounds a year. If you have been hitherto too much in confinement, you may, with my full concurrence, mix in the world, and wed a man your equal."

Ellen shook her head, and Mr. Harrison continued.

"Well, I shall not press that union if you dislike it; in this, or any other matter, I will assert no parental authority; if you are not obedient from a sense of duty, I will not seek it by compulsion. Reply to me with candour, and then determine by whom you will abide—your father or yonder gentleman."

He paused, and seemed to hesitate; but promptly he thus continued—

"You love him?"—"Dearer than life!" returned a feeble voice, so inarticulate as to be almost inaudible.

"And will you for him give up home and father, fortune, kindred, country?"—"All will I give up if required. But, O my father, pardon me, pardon him! and make us for life your slaves."

Mr. Harrison coldly waved his hand.

"Pause," he said, "before you repeat this resolution, for, let it be repeated, and the same roof shall never cover us again."

There was a momentary, a dreadful silence. Ellen raised her eyes; she looked upon the cold marble countenance of her father, she met the fond and anxious glances of the handsome stranger, and love prevailed.

"Wilt thou abide by him?"—"Till death!" she murmured, and fainted in her lover's arms.

"It is settled," replied Mr. Harrison, as he rung the bell and ordered his own carriage to the door immediately; while the major placed Ellen in a chair, and bathed her lips and temples with water. Kneeling beside her, he called her by every term of endearment, and in two or three minutes he saw her sufficiently recovered.

While this scene was passing, Mr. Harrison stood a looker on, with his back against the mantlepiece, until the carriage-wheels were heard. In a cool and collected voice he ordered Miss Ellen's trunks to be put in.

"You are bound," he said, turning to my father, "I presume, to Scotland—for I trust you mean my daughter honourably;" and a bitter smile passed over his pale and sarcastic countenance. Again my father's cheek blazed.—"Nay, gallant sir, do not be irate; I know little of the world, but I have heard that sometimes these midnight meetings end with scanty ceremony. Might I request you to favour me with a certificate of marriage, so soon as this prudent and dutiful young lady becomes an honoured wife?—Give me my writing-desk." It was brought, and he unlocked it; then, turning to his daughter, he continued—"You must not leave this house a beggar," and averting his head, he held a note-case towards her. She, poor soul, made a last desperate effort—she flung herself at his feet, and clasped his knees in speechless agony. But Mr. Harrison had an iron heart and iron nerves, and he coldly disengaged himself. "The carriage waits, sir," he said, addressing the major: "it will convey you to the next stage. You had better secure that pocket-book; it contains all you will ever get from me—one thousand pounds. I once invited you here, but now you are an intruder;" and retiring from the room, his steps were heard deliberately pacing the corridor, as if nothing unusual had occurred.

My father raised his lifeless bride and bore her

through the hall; none resisted him; Denis jumped up behind the carriage—Phœbe had disappeared in the general confusion—and, on a wild and fearful night, my mother deserted her home. The park-gates closed after her for ever—she flung herself distractedly into her lover's arms, "and now the world was all before her."

CHAPTER V.

NEWSPAPERS AND A DRAGGING HOME.

"And such paragraphs in the newspapers."
The Rivals.

"O'Roarke's noble feast will ne'er be forgot,
By those that were there, and by those that were not."
Old Ballad.

AFTER my mother's marriage she accompanied my father to Ireland. They delayed a few weeks in Edinburgh, under the plea of seeing that ancient and interesting city, but in reality, from a hope that some channel for a reconciliation might open between Ellen and her irritated parent.

Probably the wish expressed by the latter, that a certificate of his daughter's marriage should be transmitted, encouraged this expectation. The major accordingly obeyed his wishes; and in forwarding a document from the celebrated artist of Gretna, enclosed it in a manly and respectful letter from himself, in which he requested to be forgiven for the step he had taken. Poor Ellen also accompanied her husband's epistle with a strong appeal to the feelings of her father. In due course of post the receipt of the certificate was formally acknowledged by Mr. Harrison, the soldier's letter totally unnoticed, and his lady's returned with an unbroken seal. This latter circumstance the major concealed from his gentle bride, who was already suffering under the effects of parental displeasure.

In all besides, Ellen was truly happy. Hers was a heart formed for a tender and undying attachment. Before she wedded, she loved her husband with girlish romance, but now she idolised him as woman will, when she turns the undivided affections of a warm heart upon one sole and cherished object. Without a murmur she prepared to leave her native land; and strong in all-confiding love, consigned every hope of happiness to one comparatively a stranger. While on the evening preceding their embarkation, he pictured the lonely spot on which the house of his fathers stood; while he described rude hills and savage scenery, and a wild population professing another faith, and speaking a different tongue—"And wilt thou venture thither, Ellen?"

Clasping him in her arms, she turned her soft expressive eyes on his, as she repeated the beautiful passage from Scripture:—

"Whither thou goest I will go. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!"

The reception my mother met from my father's family, was as enthusiastic as she could have anticipated. Before the gallant Cæsar had even intimated to his brother, as "head of the house," any intention upon his part of committing matrimony, the English newspapers teemed with an account of his elopement with "the beautiful heiress of the wealthy Mr. Harrison." The singular cause that induced him to retire from his regiment was still fresh in public recollection, and the absurd manner in which these two exploits were ridiculously coupled in the same paragraphs was indeed provoking enough. *The Morning Post* thus announced my father's marriage:—

"Major C—s—r B——ke, who, it will be remembered, abruptly retired from the 18th some months since, for stopping up a chimney-flue, by which two persons were unfortunately suffocated, passed through Carlisle on Sunday last, in a carriage-and-four, accompanied by the beautiful heiress of Stainsbury Hall. No pursuit after the fugitives was attempted, as Mr. H—rr—n lies without the least hope of recovery, from a wound of a pistol-ball received in the unfortunate *mêlée* that occurred on the recent occasion. The report that two keepers and the major's servant are dead, is at least premature. Of the recovery of one of the former we know that sanguine hopes are entertained."

The Morning Chronicle thus delivered itself:—

"We have often to lament the culpable inaccuracy of some of our contemporaries. In a morning journal of yesterday, a very imperfect statement is given of a recent occurrence in high life, of which we have been in full possession, but which, through delicacy to the feelings of the parties concerned, we have abstained from noticing. It will be a subject of gratification to the numerous and distinguished connections of 'both the houses,' to learn that Mr. H——n, whose leg it was found necessary to amputate above the knee, bore the operation well; and that the gallant ex-major, after having the ball very skilfully extracted by Dr. Drench, of Newark, was able to proceed to Gretna with the agitated but beautiful bride. The domestic who unhappily lost his life on this lamentable occasion was under-butler at Stainsbury Park, where he had lived for fifteen years and a half, greatly respected. He leaves a widow and seven young children to lament his premature death."

The Globe had another version of "the affair," from which, however, *The Sun* took care to differ. *The Evening Mail* denied the suffocation point-blank; and *The Courier* assured the world, that neither man, woman, nor child were killed, wounded, or missing, save and except the young lady and a poodle-dog; which latter, by the accidental falling of an imperial, had been maimed for life. Now, though all this was to the parties very provoking, and particularly annoying to Mr. Harrison, yet it *eclated* the business gloriously in Connaught. Nothing could have been more consonant to the general taste of the aristocracy of that favoured corner of the earth. First, there was an elopement. Second, it was with an heiress. Third, the successful swain was a member of "the tribes"* —a genuine scion of the *ould stock*. Fourth, there were divers lives lost on the occasion. Fifth, judging from conflicting statements, there must have been a general *rookawn*,†, without which, a runaway match would not be worth a straw. In short, it was unanimously resolved, that Cæsar Blake was "a broth of a boy;" that his lady, in person and purse, would be a useful addition to the neighbourhood; and that if

* The most ancient families in Galway are known by this title.

† *Rookawn*, in English, means a general row.

elderly gentlemen, under-butlers, and poodle-dogs interrupt half-pay majors, they must abide the consequences. To this general commendation, even Miss Sally Macnamara, oblivious of stuffed flues and false imprisonment, magnanimously assented.

My mother's journey into Connaught was one of novelty and interest. She had been hitherto secluded, and almost caged from infancy within her father's mansion, and to her the world was new, strange, and imposing. Mr. Harrison from boyhood had indulged a general dislike towards female society. He married, rather as a matter of family necessity to perpetuate his name, and prevent his large estates from passing to a collateral branch. He had lost his wife soon after his union; and whether their tempers had been dissimilar, or that he had a fancy to remain unshackled, he ever afterwards eschewed "the holy estate." Had Ellen been a boy, he might have probably bestowed more attention in cultivating the temper, and gaining the affections of his only offspring. But in childhood Ellen was confided to a nurse and governess; and when she approached maturity, her father was more solicitous to estrange his daughter from the world, than, by a judicious introduction to society, correct the deficiencies inseparable from an imperfect education. It is true, that from competent instructors she had acquired the usual routine of fashionable accomplishments. She learned languages, understood music, was conversant with books, but perfectly unacquainted with mankind. Hence her rapid and romantic attachment to my father might have possibly originated; and with an ardent imagination and feeling heart, no wonder that her fancy overcame her prudence. She had no countervailing passion to check the first outbreakings of youthful passion. To her father she looked with reverence; but she looked with fear. There were no sympathies between them. She lacked an object on whom to bestow her young affections; and one like Cæsar Blake, handsome, showy, imposing, and *distingué*, was the likeliest person in the world to obtain them.

As the major and his bride landed at a northern port, their route to Connaught lay through a desolate but romantic country. The language, the scenery, and the people, were new to the pretty *sasanach*.* The risk of traversing a kingdom on the eve of a convulsion, and where a civil war had already broken out, was alarming to one who had scarcely passed the boundaries of her father's park. Every group of peasants alarmed the timid traveller, for everything bespoke apprehension and insecurity. The preparations of her husband and his attendant against attack; the frequency of military posts; the marching of troops; the occasional interruptions from patrols; and even her husband's communications with the peasantry in a strange tongue—all tended to divert my mother's attention, and prevent her from dwelling upon the home she had deserted, and the parent of whom her own act had bereaved her.

The bleak and uninteresting country between Enniskillen and Sligo had been safely passed; and after a necessary rest, the travellers proceeded to cross the wild but romantic baronies of Tireragh and Tyrawley. That mountain-road, destined to witness soon the movements of an invading army, was still quiet — and having reached the boundary of Galway, my father stopped at a solitary inn, where the carriage of his kinsman was in waiting.

The sun was setting gloriously on Lough Corrib, and that magnificent sheet of water was blazing in the red stream of departing day. Around, mountain was piled on mountain; their dark and rocky bases, finely contrasted with their pointed summits, now covered with a cap of snow. For miles the road was cut through the declivity of a hill, leading through defiles or overhung by precipices, which, to a timid traveller, were alarming enough. The last gleam of daylight disappeared as the carriage cleared a deep mountain gorge, and entered a flat and extensive valley, rendered additionally gloomy from the height of the hills which on either side shut it in.

At the extremity of this highland glen the ancient mansion of the Blakes was erected. The major, in the feeble moonlight, endeavoured to point out the edifice to his bride, and directed her attention to the dusky outline which was indistinctly visible. While she looked in the direction, lights appeared and vanished, while on the right and left of the road others danced along the hills, or flashed through the copsewood; and at the extremity of the glen a ruddy flare from a stationary fire was discernible. The fair traveller was about to inquire what those meteors were, when the carriage turning an angle of the road, disclosed a dark mass of human beings moving rapidly towards them. Suddenly, a wild yell arose from an adjacent hillock, a horn was shrilly blown, a thousand torches were lighted up, and the road, the rocks, and every rising ground, appeared crowded with a countless multitude of fierce and savage-looking people. A number of them rushed forward—the carriage stopped—and a tremendous shout echoed through the valley. Ellen screamed and clung to her husband for protection. "Gracious God!" she exclaimed, as the horses were being taken off; "are they about to murder us?"

"Arrah! no, my lady," replied the well-known tones of Mr. Denis O'Brien; "they're only going to *drag your honour home!*" *

"*Drag me home!* what does all this mean, my love?" she said, addressing my father.

"Nothing, dear Ellen, but that the tenants are come here to bid you welcome in their own wild fashion, and conduct you to my brother's house. You have nothing to apprehend from them; for there is not one of these men who would not die to protect you."

Even with this assurance, my mother's heart beat violently, as she looked on the formidable escort that on every side surrounded the carriage. The lurid glare of torchlight, the fierce and savage air of the men, their wild yells, and wilder gestures, the scene, the hour—all were calculated for effect, and made, accordingly, a lasting impression upon the timid stranger.

In half an hour, a huge ivy-covered archway admitted the vehicle, and an ancient castellated building was seen at the extremity of a long straight approach, having on each side a row of

* A term applied to the English.

* *A dragging home*—is the conveying the bride to her husband's house with a full attendance of all the clan.

stately elms. A fire of immense size was blazing before the house, and a myriad of women and children flitted backward and forward, and returned yell for yell to the crowd, that encircled the carriage as it advanced slowly along the avenue. At the grand gate a group of young girls, bearing a garland formed of artificial flowers, interspersed with laurel-branches and gay-coloured ribands, headed the procession. A shout that pealed over dell and mountain welcomed the bride on entering the domain, and a salvo from some small guns upon the battlements of the castle made a suitable response. A dozen pipers struck up "O'Roark's return to Connaught," while a thousand welcomes, in English and Irish, were repeated from as many mouths.

From the denseness of the crowd, the carriage was obliged to draw up at some distance from the hall; but a personage of uncommon height descended the steps promptly, and buffeting the mob aside, unclosed the door. "Cæsar, my darlin boy!"—"Manus, my dear brother!" were mutually repeated, as my father and the stranger grasped each other's hand. The latter took the bride gently in his arms, and pronounced some Irish words in a voice of thunder; a lane through the multitude was instantly opened, and, lightly as if she had been an infant, he bore her up the steps, and into a huge hall crowded with persons of both sexes. Placing her on the floor, he looked at her for a moment; then, pressing her to his bosom, he kissed her with a fervour that dyed her cheeks with blushes.

"Cead mille fealtagh, my pretty sister," exclaimed the herculean stranger; "Mona mondiaoul! but I'm proud of you, Cæsar Blake!" Then presenting her to a crowd of cousins, he surrendered up his fair charge to be kissed and congratulated *ad libitum*.

When the first hurry of salutations was over, the timid bride looked round to see if her husband was near her; but he was not in the hall. Through the open door, however, she recognized him, borne on the shoulders of the multitude without.

"They will not harm him?" she whispered to Denis O'Brien, who was bustling after his mistress with a cloak.

"Harm him!" ejaculated the valet with a stare; "if there was a man yonder that would say black was the white of his eye, by the holy trout of Killgeever,* they would pitch him into the fire, as a gassoon* would toss in the shinbone of a horse!"—And Denis was right; for the namesake of the redoubted Roman, after making a circuit of the lawn, was safely deposited on the steps.

The banquet was duly served—the pipes commenced lilting in the hall—the bottle circulated merrily—the mob outside danced, drank whisky, shouted "Cæsar for iver!" and broke each other's heads—and all was a glorious chaos of fighting, love-making, and intoxication.

Early in the night, the bride pleaded fatigue, and begged permission to retire, which was politely granted.

One circumstance struck my mother as being singularly characteristic of the chieftain of her husband's clan. Before she retired, her new relative requested her to accompany him to the lawn, where the garland was erected on a pole, and the *élite* of the young peasants dancing beneath it. Ellen good-humouredly assented, and, leaning on his arm, passed through the crowd. The whisky, which was distributed in awful quantities, had done its duty, if blows and kisses were a proof. A young fellow, who did not observe the chieftain's approach, flourished a cudgel so near my mother as to startle her. Manus Blake made a long stride to bring the offender within reach of his arm, and with a blow felled him to the earth, from which he of the cudgel appeared in no hurry to get up. This feat, however, did not even interrupt the sentence he was delivering, which, by the way, was a solemn assurance that a more peaceable and orderly set of subjects were not in possession of the king, God bless him! than his own good tenants of Blake Hall.

Afterwards, when my mother expressed regret at the occurrence to Denis O'Brien, who attended her as closely as if he had been bred a page of honour—

"Arrah, my lady," said the lackey, "don't be after botherin yer head about spalpeens of that sort, at all at all: what the divil business had he to be handlin a *boltheine*,† good or bad, and it yer honour's *draggin home?* He's a bad member any how. I wonder if his jaw's broke? for a clout from the master—may the Lord strengthen his arm!—is liker a kick from a horse than a clip from a Christian!"

With Denis's remark my mother fully coincided—for, in good truth, Manus Blake was a hard hitter.

* No fish in ichthyology cuts a more distinguished figure than this celebrated trout.

There is a ruined chapel and holy well about a mile from the village of Louisburgh, much frequented by all good Catholics, who consider that a little penance and purgation in this life, may clear off that large arrear which improvident sinners allow to accumulate with a kind of compound interest. This blessed well, in the year '98, was tenanted by a trout of great sanctity and immense size; he was a holy and a happy fish, for the pilgrims fed him to his heart's content, and he had nothing to do, but eat, drink, and amuse himself.

It happened that a party of Scotch fencibles had been detached from headquarters to Louisburgh, and on their return, in passing the well, an ungodly Highlander, *suadente diabolo*, determined to abstract its blessed occupant. He did so, and on arriving at his barracks, proceeded to refresh himself. The fire was lighted, the trout duly prepared, and, amid the ribald jests of the profane soldiery, the devoted fish was tossed into the frying-pan; when, lo! with a clap of thunder, the trout flew up the chimney, and, without the loss of a scale, returned uninjured to Killgeever. There he lived for many a long year afterwards, gladdening the hearts of true believers, until from age and obesity he went the way of all fish.

We lament to think that, from the infidelity of the times, persons may be found sceptical enough to question the truth of this miracle. If such there be, should they find it advisable to operate at a holy well for their souls' weal, we recommend them not to select Killgeever.

* A boy.

† *Boltheine*, means the lesser moiety of a flail.

CHAPTER VI.

AN IRISH LODGE.—HARRIETTE KIRWAN'S MARRIAGE.

"Oh! did you ne'er hear of Kate Kearney,
She lives on the banks of Killarney,
From the glance of her eye, shun danger and fly,
For fatal's the glance of Kate Kearney."
Old Ballad.

THE first month of my mother's sojourn in Castle Blake was an endless round of rude and rackety dissipation. From the corners of the earth all the collateral branches of the ancient name, congregated to welcome their English relative. As each person was attended by a suitable following, befitting the high occasion of the visit, and in nowise particular as to the period of departure, large as the mansion was, it was marvellous how it could contain the crowd, who occupied every nook and cranny from the attic to the cellars. These multitudinous ramifications from the parent stem rivalled each other in their attentions to the bride. All seemed bent on offering and accepting hospitality; and so numerous were the invitations pressed upon my parents, that a whole year would not have enabled them to fulfil a moiety of the same.

Yet my mother was far from happy. Her gentle disposition was unsuited to the exuberant spirits with which all around were gifted. Her memory recurred to the unhappy circumstances attendant on her hurried marriage; and she remembered that it was unhallowed by a parent's blessing. True, when she looked upon her handsome husband, love found a powerful plea to atone for filial disobedience; but in her solitary hours the parting scene with her angry and deserted father embittered her happiness, and saddened that halcyon season, which should, without anything to alloy it, have succeeded her union with him whom she so devotedly loved.

Nor were other causes wanted to increase these regrets. One so secluded from the world till now, found herself suddenly thrown among strangers, and the member of a society constituted very differently from any she had been previously acquainted with. The cold and formal order of English visiting, the quiet and regulated character of its social intercourse, and the systematic arrangements of that home she had abandoned, painfully contrasted with the wild scene and wilder people, with whom she must be naturalized in future. Those now around her appeared a separate race from any she had been accustomed to. Careless of the present, reckless of the future, they acted from momentary impulse, and seemed indifferent whether the result was right or wrong. The women rode, visited, dressed, flirted, danced, and married. The men hunted, shot, played, drank, quarrelled, fought, and made friends again. Out of doors, there was clamour and confusion; within, a wasteful irregular, comfortless course of dissipation, to which neither time nor tide appeared to place a limit. While my mother with gratitude acknowledged the kindness with which she was universally regarded, the very efforts to prove attachment were overpowering to a timid stranger. To anticipate what she wished, to discover if possible aught that would give her pleasure, to mark her as the sole object of general attention and respect—all this was done; and yet the days when Cæsar hunted appeared interminable, and before the established order of Milesian banqueting would allow the unwilling reveller to steal from the late carouse, poor Ellen would count the weary hours as they sounded from the belfry, and pray for some peaceful home, where she might hold a more tranquil communion with him, for whom country and kindred had been left.

It was not long before an accidental disclosure of her feelings apprised her liege lord that his wife would prefer a life of less excitement to that which she led in Castle Blake. Whether from an anxiety to render her more happy than she appeared, or that his own wishes were favourably disposed to domestic quietude, my father expressed a ready assent; and a beautiful shooting-lodge at no great distance from his paternal mansion happening at the time to be unoccupied, he rented it immediately; and overruling all the objections of his hospitable brother, preparations were made for a speedy departure.

On a sweet spring morning, Cæsar Blake and his small household left the hall of his fathers to occupy their new abode. Wild as the approach to Castle Blake had looked to the fair stranger, on the memorable evening of her "dragging home," the scenery that surprised her then, was tame and common-place to that which her present route presented. The point to which their course seemed to be directed was buried in the very heart of mountains, which appeared to present insuperable obstacles to any human effort to fix a habitation within them. To approach these highlands, a rude path had been scarped through the rocky bases of the hills, or carried over ravines and along the ridge of precipices, which nature had vainly intended as a barrier against man. While passing these defiles, my mother was terror-stricken at the fearful consequences which a horse starting or a broken trace might occasion; but, these difficulties overcome, a scene of romantic grandeur was suddenly disclosed.

When the gorge of the mountain-pass was cleared, a long heathy valley, intersprinkled with grassy hillocks, presented itself. A chain of Alpine heights enclosed it at either side, and one of superior altitude to all the others seemed to block up the extremity of the glen. Throughout the whole extent of the valley a beautiful stream flowed with the capricious irregularity that distinguishes a highland river; at one time winding sluggishly through a morass, and at another bounding over some ledge of whinstone; now creeping through a flat surface of verdant heath, and again brawling along a shrubby channel, half-choked with fallen rocks and masses of turf, which the violence of winter-floods detached from the sides of the mountain.

As the travellers neared the extremity of the glen, the source of the stream, along whose banks they journeyed, suddenly became visible. It was a long, irregular sheet of dark-blue water, overhung by precipitous rocks, which sprang upwards from the margin of the tarn.* The black and beetling heights cast their shadows on the deep waters beneath them, which, unruffled by a breath of wind, exhibited a surface dimpled into a thou-

* A highland lough.

sand circles, by the rising of the trout and gambols of the water-fowl. On the very apex of the mountain, to which a perpendicular wall of grey granite had forbidden human approach, two eagles had built an aerie. Sweeping in lazy circles round the nest, their wild and piercing screams disturbed the silence of the mountain-glens, while nothing beside was heard but the bleating of sheep and the rushing of the stream. Here the road appeared to terminate; but no human dwelling was visible on the dreary expanse of this lone valley.

When, however, the travellers reached the very margin of the lake, a fissure in the hill-side, deep and narrow as if riven through the mountain by an earthquake, offered them a road. They passed the chasm safely, and in a spot, wild, lonely, and romantic beyond the power of imagining, the fairy edifice suddenly was seen.

It was a modern cottage, elegantly designed, and erected in a circular dell, formed by the bases of three precipitous hills. A small highland lake extended in front of the building, while about it pleasure-grounds were tastefully disposed, with gardens and shrubberies, and every detached building which modern luxury requires. Early as it was, roses bloomed through the trellis of the verandahs; berries of pensile plants festooned the casements richly, while the evergreens contrasted their gay foliage with the forest-trees, whose leafless branches were only breaking into bud. All around this secluded habitation bespoke the successful efforts of human cultivation, which, triumphing over natural obstacles, had formed a garden in a wilderness—an oasis among brown heaths and naked stones.

Nor did the interior of the villa disappoint the expectations its exterior elegance might occasion: all within was in excellent taste, and that best resource in solitude, the library, had been formed with considerable judgment. My mother was delighted with her new residence; her quiet but romantic fancy had here everything it panted for—here, with the man of her heart, and removed from the hurry of the world, the pretty visionary found in this highland glen "a paradise both pure and lonely."

When Cæsar Blake readily gratified his lady's longing for retirement, he was not uninfluenced by private considerations. Marriage had sobered the wild soldier, and he was wearied with the endless racketing which in Castle Blake was the order of the day. His brother was a curious relic of "Auld lang Syne"—the priest declared him "ultimus Romanorum;" and in sooth he was one of the last of those Milesian potentates, to whom ancestral virtues and vices had descended regularly with the family estates. Manus Blake was, after his own manner, as proud as he surnamed the "Morning Star;" with him the usages of his forefathers were sacred, and the roof-tree of his mansion was, in his estimation, hallowed as the sanctuary of the church. His ideas of hospitality made it the first duty of life; and he believed that he held his revenues in trust for the entertainment of all that pleased to claim it. To him noise and excitement were indispensable, and the clamour of the field without, must be succeeded by "tipsy mirth and jollity" within. Although a benedict for several years, he was childless, and therefore wanted those endearing ties which alone can render domestic quietude endurable. In politics he took no interest: he was too independent to truckle to the government, and too honourable and open-hearted to plot with the wretched demagogues of the day.

But Cæsar Blake had more cogent reasons than he thought it necessary to explain, which caused him to abridge his visit to his kinsman—a fair and dangerous relative had intimated her intention of honouring Castle Blake with her presence; and although she had bestowed her hand upon a lover, who had erst-while sighed in vain, the ex-major determined to avoid her.

During the period while my father had been absent, Harriette herself had not been unemployed. Deeply as she felt mortified at the unceremonious departure of him who proved insensible to her attractions, the full measure of her wrath was reserved for the morning, when the object of his secret expedition first transpired, and his elopement was officially gazetted with all its varied accompaniments. To conceal her feelings at this annoying disclosure was impossible, and a burst of wounded pride and hopeless passion ensued, that to the iron nerves of Manus Blake himself appeared alarming. For some days the deserted one secluded herself from all society; but on the fourth morning she surprised the family at the breakfast-table, and then and there announced her immediate departure for the capital, on a visit to her aunt. This was natural enough: none opposed her resolution; and she left accordingly for Dublin, greatly pitied by every female of the establishment, who declared her case a hopeless one—the disease was mortal, for the arrow was at her heart—and her next appearance would be, under a canopy of white plumes, on her route to Cahirmore, the last resting-place of the Kirwans. But they were wrong.

Harriette was "too fine an animal," as a puppy in the —— Light Dragoons termed her, not to be extensively addressed, and she might have entered into the holy estate more than once, had she pleased; for, as the song goes—

"Of lovers she'd plenty."

But her fancy, not to say her heart, had never been engaged but by one, and on him her fascinations were thrown away. In the number of her suitors, a Mr. Donovan was probably the most ardent, as he was avowedly the most detested; and, as he was a leading character in my father's brief history, we must formally introduce him.

He was descended from an obscure family, became early an orphan, was apprenticed to a trade he disliked, left it without ceremony, and found himself at twenty-two an adventurer on the world, without a single friend or a second guinea. With neither talent, education, or even good looks to recommend him, he contrived to push his way to a commission through an underhand and dirty channel. His character was not uncommon: low-minded, but cunning, he possessed great self-possession and unmeasured impudence: a bully, without being brave; a swaggerer, but not a gentleman. In every game of chance he was an adept, and lived by shifts and resources, which the unfortunate rage for play among the upper classes tends to a certain degree to legitimize. Many an unlucky dupe he directed to the road to ruin; and many a time,

from disastrous play, he himself was reduced to the verge of destitution and despair. Generally disliked, he seldom retained a companion long, for, occasionally, bad temper and bad manners overcame his habitual self-control. Hence he never continued long in a regiment: of course, his rank advanced not, and, a few months before the marriage of my father, he was finally removed from the army, being cashiered for shooting unfairly in a duel a young officer whom he had plundered to his last guinea.

Mr. Donovan was unhappily no stranger to my father. Four years before, Cæsar Blake had been appointed to a company over his head, which he had made certain, through secret influence, to obtain for himself. Smothering his rage, he marked my father for a victim. He tried play, but the young captain disliked it, and gradually Donovan's character became developed, and Cæsar Blake discovered, fortunately before it was too late too remedy the mischief, that Donovan had nearly estranged him from every officer in the corps. The rage of his dupe was boundless, an explanation was demanded, and a scene ensued. For a moment Donovan essayed the bully: but it failed; my father was a top shot, and it was quite evident that, in the event of a meeting, Captain Cæsar Blake would be very apt to shoot his best on the occasion. Mr. Donovan, therefore, prudently left the regiment, and from the moment he departed, his quondam dupe became first favourite with all around him.

When finally forced from the service, he arrived in Dublin without a shilling, and at a moment when his uncle, an opulent tradesman, was on the eve of dissolution. This relative of the disgraced subaltern had, by the most despicable penury, accumulated a considerable property. Although childless, he fancied to invest it in purchasing an estate, and he left Connaught to perfect this intention. His nephew had just arrived; he was utterly destitute: he asked assistance, and it was coldly refused.

Fortune is a slippery gentlewoman. Peter Donovan paraded the streets of Dublin for two days, supporting existence by the meanest subterfuges that desperate poverty could invent—and on the third morning he found himself worth two thousand pounds a year. Wonderful was his luck; he who would not have bestowed a sixpence to save his nephew from the gallows, and who had drafted a will, and laid it before counsel, to guard even against the contingency of his succession, dropped off before the document was arranged for signature, leaving to the person whom he abominated every shilling which, through a long life, he had by every villany managed to scrape together.

In his appearance Peter Donovan was uncommonly repulsive. He was tall, thin, shapeless, and inelegant; his face sharp, his cheeks hollow, with straight flaxen hair, and light eyes; in short, a *tout ensemble*, that man dislikes and woman loves not.

Such was the suitor who bowed at the shrine of the divinity, who more than once, had scornfully rejected his advances. Then, it is true, he was but a needy adventurer, and "of no estimation"—and Harriette, "fancy free," was surrounded by a troup of admirers. He came now a wealthy wooer, and found the once haughty fair one in a very different mood to any which he had previously experienced.

Certainly, it required more self-control than Harriette ever pretended that she possessed, to enable her to assume a tolerable composure. Her overtures were rejected, her love despised, her charms undervalued, and a stranger preferred. One moment, in a storm of jealous rage, she could have stabbed her lover to the heart; and yet, when the gust of passion calmed down, tender recollections would occupy her thoughts, and she would dwell in tears and tenderness on the hours she had passed with that adored object, who was now lost to her for ever.

She was in this mood when the postman's knock was heard, and her maid handed in a Galway newspaper. Hastily it was opened, and Harriette's quick eye lighted on a flaming paragraph, descriptive of my mother's welcome at Castle Blake, and detailing the various festivities which evidenced the general joy at "the arrival of the rich and beautiful bride." The blood rushed to her face, till the veins were almost bursting. The beauty of her rival, the *éclat* of her reception, drove her nearly frantic. She flung the paper in the fire, and, in a paroxysm of passion, stamped over the carpet. "Cæsar," she muttered, "I loved you as I shall never love another! I existed only in your presence—I lived upon your smiles! I would have followed you to the world's end! I would have clung to you in beggary—I would have been to you more than woman ever was to man—your mistress—your minion—your slave! Now, by my hopes of heaven, I would drug the bowl, or whet the knife that destroyed you!"

She was still in high excitement, when the door unclosed, and, unannounced, Donovan stood before her. Flashing eyes and heightened colour bespoke her agitation, but they added to her natural charms—for she looked a beautiful *bacchante*. The man who could have seen such loveliness unmoved, must have been insensible indeed. Short was the interview that succeeded—Donovan offered his hand, and Harriette accepted it.

In a few days she knelt at the altar of God with a being she detested. Her vows of constancy and affection were "false as dicers' oaths," and she left the church a perjured wife and wretched woman!

CHAPTER VII.

FRENCH LANDING.—NIGHT ADVENTURE.

"But here I leave the general concern,
To track our hero on his path of fame—
* * * * *
The dying man cried, 'Hold! I've got my gruel!'"
DON JUAN.

TIME passed rapidly; month succeeded month, and the mountain retreat of Cæsar Blake bloomed in all its beauty. The eventful summer of Ninety-eight had set in with unusual sultriness, for it was the hottest that the oldest man could recollect. For weeks together, not a shower refreshed the parched earth, and a cloudless sun shone with an intensity, that appeared better suited to a southern sky, than to the humid and capricious climate of the Emerald Isle. The insurrection,

which for the past year had been on the eve of explosion, suddenly broke out upon the twenty-third of May, and after a continued scene of ferocious crime, in which a savage population and an excited soldiery, seemed to emulate each other in deeds of blood and rapine, it was suppressed, although, for many a month afterwards, the country was devastated by banditti, and the towns disgraced by military executions.

The ferocious character of the Irish rebellion was not without exceptions. The Western insurgents were of milder mood than their Leinster brethren; and plunder was the chief crime that marked the out-breaking of the peasantry in Connaught. Few lives were consequently lost among the loyalists, although the vengeance of the executive descended with frightful severity on the miserable adherents of the French, after the republican troops had surrendered at Ballinamuck.

Until the landing of Humbert, the ex-major remained quietly in his romantic dwelling—and from its remoteness, but vague reports of scenes of violence, elsewhere transacted, reached this secluded family. While others left their houses, and flocked into garrison towns for protection, Cæsar Blake dwelt in his mountain-home without any apprehension. Indeed, he had little to fear: the shepherds and fishermen who lived among the hills, or occupied the little village on an inlet of the sea, contiguous to the lodge, were utterly unacquainted with passing events, and knew and cared about the progress of the insurrection as little as though the scene had been placed in Japan.

As my father's isolated residence was entirely out of the line of operations of either royalists or rebels, he had nothing to apprehend but from straggling plunderers, and his own followers were quite sufficient to repel any aggression of that kind. Hence, in his highland retreat, he remained in undisturbed tranquillity; and while the storm was raging at a distance, the glen that contained his youthful bride was a sort of Goshen. where the danger that menaced life and property elsewhere was unknown.

It may be readily imagined, that the gallant major was not of a temper to remain inactive when martial scenes were passing in his father-land, had not other feelings restrained his military ardour. To leave the timid and beloved stranger with none but servants to comfort and protect her in the wild dwelling in which he had placed her, would have been cruel and unmanly. As yet, no overt acts of violence had occurred; and it seemed, judging from appearances, that unnecessary alarm had been raised, and useless severity exercised by those functionaries to whom government had confided the safety of the country. Cæsar Blake, moreover, felt that he had been, on the occasion of his recent retirement from his regiment, very indifferently treated by the commander-in-chief; he considered himself an ill-used man, and resolved to remain a quiet spectator of a popular commotion, that he felt persuaded had been fostered for sinister purposes by those in power, who had ample means of suppression in their hands, so soon as the political objects for which the storm was raised should be effected.

But these resolutions were at once abandoned, when a trusty courier brought him intelligence that the French had landed in force at Killala. Love and pique were overcome by the master-passion of a soldier, and he determined to set off, without delay, for the head-quarters of the royalists at Castlebar, and join some regiment as a volunteer, until a battle should decide the fate of the bold invaders, and prove how far a French demonstration could produce a general outbreaking of the disaffected. Leaving his little garrison under the charge of Denis O'Brien, he feigned an apology for a short absence, by pretending that important business called him suddenly to Castle Blake, and took a tender farewell of the gentle Ellen, who little imagined that her adored husband was leaving her arms for a battle-field.

Cæsar Blake selected the cool of evening for crossing the mountains that divided the neighbouring garrison from his highland home. The dew was rising from the fen, the moon was dancing on the lake, and never had a lovelier evening closed upon the romantic valley he was quitting. Mounted on a trained and powerful charger, with pistols in his holsters, a sabre at his side, and a small valise behind the saddle, to contain a change of linen, the soldier, with his military cloak flung round him, rode unattended along the path, which wound through the hills for several miles, before it reached the main road. All was silent as the grave, and nothing was heard at this sweet hour, but the challenge of the cock-grouse, or bleatings from the sheep-pens. Now and again the shepherd's dog, roused by the hoof-sounds of the traveller, alarmed the tenants of the lonely *bouillie*;* but all else was quiet as the grave, and without interruption the belated traveller reached the defile, which united the mountain-path with the road that led to his destination.

This gorge into the hill-country was formed by a deep ravine between cliffs of grey limestone. The moonlight was shaded by the rocks, and the pass was dark and embarrassed by loose stones which had fallen from the face of the heights. The horseman was consequently obliged to ride with caution, and at a deliberate pace he entered the defile.

He had reached the centre of the pass when the footfalls of an advancing traveller were heard. It was an awkward place to meet an enemy. My father tightened his reins, and drew a pistol from the holster, and next moment a rider appeared through the gloom.

"Who goes there?" demanded the soldier.—"Who are you?" responded the unknown horseman.—"Advance a step and I fire!" rejoined the major.—"That liberty I'll take first," was the cool reply, as a pistol flashed, and a bullet whistled past my father.

Cæsar was no sluggard. Promptly the fire was returned, and forcing his horse forward with the spur, in a second he was sword-in-hand alongside his assailant, ready to cut him down.

"Hold!" cried a voice, with a groan. "Your sword is needless, friend. The pistol did its duty. That shot broke my arm, and I surrender. But, good God! whom have we here? What! Cæsar Blake?"—"The same—Conolly! Is it possible?" and the riders mutually recognized each other.—"What a cursed chance!" exclaimed the wounded horseman. "Who the devil could

* *Bouillies*, are summer bivouacs, used by shepherds when depasturing their flocks in the mountains.

have expected that you should at this late hour be wandering among the mountains. That scarlet cloak deceived me, and I took you for a patrol."

"And what brings you here, Conolly? No treason, I trust?"—"Why, my dear Cæsar, the truth may fairly out. I am sped for many a long day; and as the French say, *hors de combat.* Humbert is advancing on Castlebar, and I was despatched from head-quarters to visit you, and raise the Galway people."—"*Me!*"—"Ay—you. No folly with friends. I know your heart is with us, and I have a splendid offer from the general. Why, man, you shall be '*en second*,' to himself!"

"Conolly, is this a time for fooling?" said the major.—"Fooling!" replied the disabled rider. "Heaven knows I am in sorry humour for that to-night. Why, my arm is shattered, and lies as useless by my side as the scabbard of your sabre. No, faith, I know you are with us; for Donovan apprised General Hutchinson, that you were to hold a principal command. This you may depend on, for it comes through a secret agent, who acquaints us with all the drunken hogs that are twaddling about, and the channel is sure."—"Conolly, you are sadly misinformed. I am at this moment on my way to join the King's troops, and old George has not a more devoted follower."

"Humph! after all, he used you scurvily enough, if that blanket and chimney business be as it was generally represented," said the stranger with a sneer.—"No matter. I swore allegiance to old square-toes. That oath with me is sacred. Not but I wish the good old gentleman had better military counsellors."

"You would not, however, betray me, Blake?"—"No more than sell my soul to the foul fiend."—"I thought so," said the stranger.—"I am," replied the soldier, "a loyal subject, but no spy to divulge the secret which a feather-headed friend communicated, without taking the trouble of asking whether I was with or against him."

"Alas! Cæsar, I am completely bothered."—"Be advised, my dear fellow, by me," returned the soldier. "Hasten to the lodge. Say you have been riding in the dark; that your horse came down, and your arm was broken, and you want it attended to. Remain quietly until the storm blows over, and you will not only save your limb, but most probably your neck into the bargain."

The wounded man was silent for a minute.

"You are right, friend Cæsar. I am useless now, and would only be an incumbrance. There are old women enough on both sides without me, and I should be an ass to stretch a rope, without the sorry satisfaction of striking a blow or two before I graced the gallows. But time presses you and me. Ride—for before twelve hours, the French will enter Castlebar."—"Nonsense," replied the soldier.—"Nay, honest Cæsar, it is true. And now, God speed you! I shall follow your advice, and avail myself of your kindness. A time may come; but no matter."

"Shall I be interrupted?" asked the royalist.—"Likely enough," replied the wounded horseman. "If you are stopped, inquire if 'the moon is near the full.' But ask the question *in Irish.* I must be off, for I can hardly keep the saddle. Confound you, Cæsar! how close you shoot, where none beside yourself and the owls can know a man from a haystack. And yet I levelled at you pretty correctly."—"Too close to be agreeable," replied the royalist; "I heard the whistle of the bullet."—"Well, that same is a comfort," said the wounded traveller. "There is a friendly hut not very distant, where I shall get my arm bandaged. And now, God speed thee! worthy descendant of a lucky Roman. Farewell." And turning his horse, the unfortunate cavalier rode off in an opposite direction to that taken by his opponent.

When my father cleared the defile, he found himself in safety on the coach-road. All danger was over; for the King's troops, no doubt, took care to keep the communication open. The major pricked merrily on, until about a mile from the mountain-pass, a long and narrow bridge, with its high and ill-constructed battlements, crossed a bold river. Built in the ancient style, its centre-arch rose so considerably as to shut from even a mounted traveller a prospect of the extremity. Cæsar rode forward without apprehension, until on topping the crown of the bridge, he found his further progress barred by a crowd of men, whose various implements of destruction glanced in the moonlight, and told at once that they were of the insurgent party. The soldier reined up, and would have fallen back, but suddenly the other end of the bridge was occupied, and retreat impracticable. There was no time for deliberation; the enemy was before and behind him; the chances of danger pretty equal; and like a good soldier, he chose that in front. Drawing his second pistol, he advanced steadily within a few paces of those who occupied the pass, when a rough voice in very indifferent English challenged him.

"Who goes there?"—"A friend."—"Whose friend are ye?"—"The King's."

"You are a prisoner, then," said a person who appeared the leader, dressed in a frieze great-coat, and armed with a musket, which he presented at the traveller.—"A prisoner! To whom, pray?" was the firm reply.—"*To us Frinch!*" replied a second voice, in broad Irish.

My father laughed heartily at the absurdity of the fellow.

"Stand back, fools!" he replied in their native language; "is the moon near the full, pray?"—"Pass on—*ballagh faugh, a ballagh!*" * exclaimed a score of voices, as they opened right and left. Mending his pace, the rider pushed on rapidly, and in an hour the lights in Castlebar appeared flaring in the paler moonshine.

It struck the soldier as a remarkable want of military precaution, that, while it was known that a hostile force was in the neighbourhood, neither picket nor patrol were on the roads that led directly to the garrison. Close to the entrance of the town, for the first time, a yeomanry vidette challenged him; but my father being personally known, prevented the loyalist from offering him any interruption; and, unquestioned by any other, the major rode on, and halted at the barrack-gate.

* *Anglicé*, "Clear the road."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESS-TABLE.—MARCH OF HUMBERT.

"Who knocks so loud, and knocks so late?"
SCOTT.

"In heaven's name, let us get some supper now,
And then I'm with you, if you're for a row."
Don Juan.

"WHA gangs there?" cried a Highlander, advancing his arms.—"A friend," replied my father; "open the gate; I wish to speak with the general."—"Guard, turn out!" exclaimed the sentinel. "Guard, turn out!" responded a second voice within. An immediate shuffling of feet and rattling of muskets succeeded, and apprised the late traveller that considerable ceremony would attend his untimely visit to the commander of the garrison. Presently an officer appeared at the wicket, and demanded his name and business. My father answered that he was a loyalist, and his business was private and momentous. "I suspect, notwithstanding," replied the Scotchman, "that ye stand a poor chance of seeing the generals to-night; they dinna much like to talk with strangers over their wine: but I'll go see."

After an absence of some minutes, "the Highland ancient" re-appeared, with a peremptory refusal. "The generals," he said, "would na be disturbed; it was na time, they said, to fash them wi' business—it would be time enough tomorrow." But the traveller was not to be repulsed by one refusal.—"The morning will be too late," he said; "give that card to General H., and tell him I bear important intelligence which may require the promptest consideration."

A still longer time elapsed than when on his first embassy before the commander of the guard returned.

"All's right," he said to the sentry; "Duncan, open the wee gate: lead in your horse, friend—and I'll conduct ye to the generals.—"The generals!—What, are there any here besides General H.?"—"Ay, troth, are there: gin they be gude as plenty, we will be guy an weel commanded; and if they strike but half as hard as they drink, the de'il himsel will na match them for a minute."

As he spoke, the major and his conductor reached the building where the commanders were assembled. Loud and tipsy merriment was heard within; and if Cæsar Blake expected to have found the gallant leaders of the King's troops concerting military movements over the midnight lamp, he must have been marvellously disappointed. Passing a sentry at the door, and half-a-dozen orderlies loitering about the corridor, the ex-major was directed to the end of the hall; a mess-waiter in attendance opened a door, announced his name, and ushered him into the presence.

Albeit, though Cæsar himself had not been indoctrinated in military tactics at the feet of the most rigid disciplinarian, yet he was shocked and disgusted to witness a very unexpected scene. Though the country was in a state of insurrection, and an invading army within a few hours' march, he found the royalist commanders revelling at the mess-table, surrounded by their aids-de-camp and field-officers. There was scarcely an individual at the board who did not betray unequivocal symptoms of inebriety. Two personages were already *hors de combat* beneath the table—and others so far advanced towards that comfortable condition, as to warrant a safe conclusion that a similar fate awaited them. On glancing round the room, my father remarked two or three country gentlemen who commanded yeomanry corps intermingled with the regular bacchanalians, and caught the cadaverous scowl of Captain Donovan furtively directed at himself. Conolly's intelligence crossed his memory, and he darted a withering look at the husband of the inconstant Harriette; but the voice of General H. recalled his attention from his quondam acquaintance.

"Cæsar, noblest of Romans!"—(hiccup)—"take a chair, fill a bumper, and then tell us what the devil drives you here," was the singular address.

"Hearing," replied the major, "of the landing at Killala, I deemed it my duty to join his Majesty's troops as a volunteer, and on my way to head-quarters, accidentally learned some news that appeared sufficiently important to warrant this late and unceremonious intrusion."

"What may the news be?" inquired one of the general officers, with a carelessness that half implied derision.—"Am I to communicate my intelligence *here?* Possibly it might suit a smaller audience," replied Cæsar Blake.—"All here, sir," returned the commander, haughtily, "are the King's officers, or their faithful allies and fellow-soldiers; we have no secrets from either."

"Enough, sir," said the traveller; "my intelligence simply is, that the French are on their march, and Humbert moving rapidly on the town with all his disposable force."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the generals. "Ha, ha, ha!" repeated the aids-de-camp. "Ha, ha, ha!" re-echoed the captains of the yeomanry.

My father's cheek reddened. In a voice where suppressed rage was scarcely concealed, he replied: "Were my information valueless, methinks at least it might have been received with that civility which the communications of one gentleman to another require and obtain. Pray, general, should this intelligence prove correct, would a French movement on the town be an event worth military consideration?"

"Undoubtedly, most gallant Roman, it would surprise us all. But sit down and wash the cobwebs from thy throat"—(for my father still continued standing); "we may probably go to look for Humbert, but, believe me, Humbert will not come to look for us. Why, man, our advanced guard would be sufficient to cut him to pieces, Where, my friend, did you learn this idle story?"

"General H.," said my father, with seriousness, "you admit it to be of momentous consequence if true; now, from a source which I shall not disclose, but which I pledge a soldier's honour is worthy to be implicitly relied upon, I learned it: and you are now apprised of what I believe to be a fact, and it is for you and these gentlemen to act as you please."

The decisive tone of the ex-major appeared to create a sensation.

"And you consider your intelligence authentic?" inquired General H.—"Can you doubt it?" observed General T., with a sneer. "If report speaks true, none should be better in-

formed of insurrectionary movements than the worthy major."

My father made two strides from the place where he had been standing, and confronted the last speaker.

"You will please to recollect, sir, that I am no longer subordinate to any, and that I acknowledge no superior in this room. I feel your taunt, and am no stranger to the rancorous source from which it emanated. Now, general, I shall briefly tell you what I am—a gentleman of as stainless honour and ancient blood as any that bears the King's commission; and furthermore, as true and devoted a subject. Does any here question my loyalty? 'Tis well—I should have told him to his teeth he lied. I know that at this table sits one villain; let him follow me outside the gate, and he shall there know how far my hand can defend my honour. You have now my tidings, gentlemen, such as they be; and to-morrow will tell whether they are false or true. Good night."

"Stop, stay, my dear fellow!" cried General H.; "d—n it, man, no offence was offered. I like your spirit—(hiccup.) You have been misinformed. But fill a glass—devilish sound claret—(hiccup). Depend upon it that all's right, and in a day or two you shall have a sight of the blue-coats, unless they have re-embarked already. Come, sit down."

"Excuse me, general. Farewell, sir," he continued, addressing the commanding-officer who had so broadly insinuated his disloyalty. "A word at parting: when the scoundrel who traduced me next tells you that I am disaffected, whisper in his ear, that Cæsar Blake holds him to be a cold-blooded, gambling, murderous coward; and tell him, I would part with this right hand to free the world from such a miscreant as I believe him to be! Adieu, gentleman: before to-morrow's noon you will decide whether my intelligence was fabrication, and whether you should have noticed the warning you have received."

So saying, he flung himself from the mess-room, leaving the bacchanalian group in great confusion and uncertainty. But this indecision lasted but for a moment, and the ex-major's alarm vanished with the next cooper. Daylight broke upon them ere they separated; as, with few exceptions, they were respectively carried to their quarters by the orderlies in waiting.

When my father reached the gate, he found the subaltern waiting his return. His horse was standing at the guard-house door, covered with a watch-coat, and a Highlander hand-rubbing him carefully.

"He's a bra' beast," said the commander of the gate, "an' it would be a pity to neglect him. I feared he migh tak' cauld, so I threw a coat about him. I did anither job too; one o' yeir pistels wanted loadin', so I took the leeburty of tightening the flint and sticking in a cartridge. Here, man, tak' a drap—it's right Nantz—better brandy niver topped a tongue; 't will do ye gude, for the dew is rising heavy."

The kindness of the Scotch soldier struck my father forcibly. "Thank you, comrade," he said; "possibly after to-morrow you and I shall be better acquainted. This is my address;" and he handed him a card.

The Scotch ancient applied the address to a guard-room lantern, and with a slow and precise intonation pronounced, "Maajor Cæsar Blake;" then lifting his eyes slowly he said in an under-voice, "Ha'e ye any news, maajor"—"None," said the traveller, as he tightened his girths, and led his horse through the wicket. "But," and he laid his lips to the Highlander's ear, "before six hours you may have an unexpected visitor, and, I fear, but a drunken reception to welcome him with."—Donald paused, and scratched his head; "I ken it a'," he muttered; "ay, troth, it's like eneugh; I feared as much before it:" and he wrung my father's hand, and they parted.

When the major rode from the gate, he began to consider where he was to seek a lodging. Two o'clock pealed from the jail clock, and he remembered that every inn and public-house was filled to the very garrets, while private residences were crowded with numbers of refugees, who flocked for safety from the adjacent country. In this difficulty he recollected that a female relative still remained at home, and occupied her mansion, while others, less exposed, had been abandoned; and as his horse was untired, he decided upon riding out to his kinswoman's, rather than institute, at this early hour of the morning, a tedious, and perhaps bootless research after a bed and stable. Accordingly, as he had been furnished with the parole and countersign by his Highland friend, the traveller found no difficulty in passing a few straggling videttes, and in less than an hour, drew bridle before his kinswoman's door.

The late summons of the ex-major occasioned considerable alarm, and he was reconnoitred from divers spy-holes, until his identity was satisfactorily ascertained. Then was he freely admitted; his horse stabled, fed, littered, and left to his repose; while the master, in due honour, was welcomed by his fair relative, and found a supper waiting for him, that after his long ride was highly acceptable.

When the traveller had sufficiently refreshed himself, his hostess urged him to retire, and endeavour to procure a little sleep; but the morning sun was streaming through the curtains of the room, and my father preferred to lie down without undressing for an hour or two on a sofa. It was well that he so determined. In less than half an hour, a horse at speed entered the court-yard; the family rapidly collected; and the rider's communication at once assured my father that the French were actually advancing, and by a very different route to that by which they might have been expected.

The pontoon-road, which skirts the beautiful and picturesque shores of Lough Conn, and connects the towns of Castlebar and Ballina, was not then formed, nor was there a bridge over the confluence of the lakes, the passage being effected by means of a bateau or punt, from which the road appears to have derived its name. At that time there were two routes by which Castlebar could be approached from the north. By the left, the lower, or Foxford one, afforded an easy line of march to an army with cannon and field equipage. On the right of the lakes, the second communication was opened by the old mountain-road. But this route was hilly and difficult, and intersected by numerous highland streams, many of which being without bridges, presented fords barely passable by a horseman, but impracticable to every species of carriage. Nearly mid-way,

this road cuts the mountain-chain that rises from the shores of the lake, and winds through the romantic pass of Barnagee. Here, for nearly two miles, the line is a succession of defiles, overhung by masses of rock, scarped along the brows of precipices, and everywhere commanded by heights which enfilade its entire extent. To transport the *materiel* of an army along this line would be impossible. Hence, the lower road was the only one deemed worth the trouble of observation, and beyond patrolling it for two or three miles without the town, the mountain-line was totally neglected.

When Humbert decided to march direct on Castlebar, he was well aware of the great disparity of his own force, compared with that of the royalists. He mustered about nine hundred infantry, some fifty hussars, with two brass six-pounders; these, from the lightness of their carriages, termed "curricle guns." Upon the guerilla mob that would accompany him, he reckoned little. They were numerous, it is true, and partially clothed and appointed by the republicans; but, out of the field, they were impatient of control and difficult to organise; and, in it, nothing but an armed rabble. Opposed to him was a regular force of fully three thousand men of all arms, with several hundred irregulars attached, who in discipline might be inferior to troops of the line, but in spirit second to none in the service. The cavalry were numerous and well-mounted; the artillery highly efficient; while, confident in numbers, fresh, in position, and well aware of the smallness of the force that threatened them, the loyalists had every advantage. They knew that an immense force was marching to their support, and converging on every point whereon it was possible for the French general to operate. The roads were good, the communications open, and the yeomanry corps perfectly acquainted with the localities of the country, and therefore admirable guides for a commander to depend upon. With such a force opposed, and having these local and contingent advantages, it was a bold and hazardous determination of the French general to become assailant—nothing to rely on but his own abilities, and no resources but in the tried bravery of a handful of veterans.

Humbert was aware that he must strike an immediate blow, no matter how much the chances of success might be against him. To attempt to organise his rebel allies would have been absurd; for in a few days an overwhelming force would have been upon him. His only hope therefore was, in making a powerful impression; and to confirm the disaffected, or maintain himself in the country, turned on the success of a prompt and desperate attempt on Castlebar. Accordingly, at midnight, he marched from Ballina, by the lower road. This movement, as he anticipated, was directly discovered, and intelligence despatched to apprise the English generals. To mask his true route, Humbert kept the Foxford line for several miles; but suddenly wheeling to the right, by a cross road, he turned his face to the hills, and falling into the moutain-path, advanced on Castlebar by the defiles of Barnagee.

Fortune favours the bold—a single gun, a company of light infantry could have held him in check, and maintained the pass, until he must have been crushed by superior numbers, or driven back on Ballina; and the latter in its consequences would have been as ruinous as the former.

It was a singular chance, that my father was fated to bring confirmation of the tidings which, a few hours before, had been so unceremoniously declared unworthy of belief. The house of his relative was situated at the bottom of the hill through which the pass of Barnagee winds, and, from its remote locality, had not been deserted by the occupants, as other mansions were, on the first intelligence of a French descent. A servant had, on the preceding evening, been despatched to see that the cattle on a distant farm were in safety. On his return with the first light, he observed from a high ground, the arms of the advancing troops glittering in the earliest sunbeams that topped the summit of the hills. Without stopping to observe their numbers or appearance, he spurred on to give his mistress notice, and thus enable her to reach the garrison of Castlebar; and a more unexpected and alarming messenger never disturbed a household than honest Bryan, when he announced that "the French, horse and foot, were at his heels at Barnagee."

My father promptly mounted his horse, and rode off to ascertain the fact: none of the domestics had any fancy to lessen the distance between themselves and the invaders, and the gallant major made his *reconnaissance* alone.

He rode rapidly to the pass; not a human being was visible, and the country was more quiet even than on ordinary occasions; but when he gained the crown of the defile, a large body of men in blue uniforms, was seen moving rapidly on in close column.

It was quite apparent to the practised eye of a soldier, that the regulars were accompanied by a large insurgent mob, and it was difficult to say what part of these allies appeared the most contemptible. The clownish and unsoldierly look of those whom the invaders had clothed, was most ridiculous, and contrasted with the villanous and banditti character, that cross-belts over frieze jackets gave to the remainder of the rabble.

Cæsar Blake pressed forward, and gained a height that commanded an uninterrupted view. At the bottom of this hill a mountain-torrent had formed a deep ravine across the road, and the soldier suspected, that Humbert would find no inconsiderable difficulty in transporting his cannon over this formidable chasm; nor was he wrong. After a considerable delay, he saw one gun extricated by immense exertion, but the carriage of the other broke down; every attempt to disengage it was useless, and the impatient Frenchman spiked and abandoned it, and continued his march with but a solitary six-pounder.

The *reconnaissance* of my father had been noticed, and some well-mounted men detached from the main body spurred up the hill; but as Cæsar had already ascertained correctly the number and description of the French force, he had nothing more to learn, and rode off to announce the veritable march of Humbert.

His horse, in fine condition and sufficiently rested, carried him forward at a slapping pace; and within six hours, as he had prophesied, from the period of his first visit, he re-entered the barrack-gates of Castlebar, to herald the rapid advance of the small but formidable corps.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROUT OF CASTLEBAR.

"And there was mounting in hot haste; the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war;
And the deep thunder, peal on peal afar;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;
While thronged the citizens, with terror dumb,
Whispering with white lips—'The foe! they come! they come!'"

Childe Harold.

"Long life to yee'r noble honour! May ye live all yee'r days, an' nobody kill ye!" exclaimed an old beggar-woman, as she trotted down Sackville-street after General ——, who was reckoned no hero. "Am'int I bound night an' day to pray for ye, since ye saved my son's life at Castlebar?"—"*I save him?* I forget the circumstance."—"Ogh, but yee'r mimrie's bad, an' more the pity. Why, Ginirel, *you ran first, and Pat ran after you!*"

JOE MILLER.

TWO hours after my father had left the British generals in full carouse, a yeoman brought certain intelligence of Humbert's midnight march. He had seen him advancing by the lower road, and of course concluded that his approach would be by Foxford. Roused from their drunken slumbers, the commanders would scarcely credit the account given by the loyalist; but my father's conviction of the accuracy of his own information tallied with the yeoman's news, and at last they condescended to believe it possible, that the French were actually on their march to attack the town. A body of carbineers and light cavalry were hurriedly despatched upon the lower road, to observe the expected enemy, while the drums beat, and the troops got under arms.

The scene which the barrack-yard presented was not flattering to the military character of the commanders; there was a general confusion everywhere apparent—an absence of regularity—almost a panic, that would have disgraced a brigade of yeomanry. To judge from the hurried preparations, one would have imagined that an overwhelming force threatened the garrison with destruction, nor ever dreamed that those symptoms of alarm, were occasioned by the advance of an enemy so numerically and physically inferior. But my father was not permitted to make further observations. An aid-de-camp summoned him to the room where the generals were assembled; and there he found them in council, with their respective staffs, and the officers commanding the artillery and cavalry.

It was quite evident that all were in a different mood to that in which he found them on his former visit; they were under feelings, in which self-reproach and some alarm might be detected by an acute observer. Never were men worse prepared for calm but determined action; nervous, irritable, and suffering from the effects of recent debauch, they could form no decisive plan, or issue an intelligible order.

"Your information was correct, Major Blake," said General H., as he offered his hand to my father.—"Had I not been well assured of its accuracy, believe me, sir, I should have been sorry to disturb you so unseasonably as I did," was the reply; "I only have to regret, that my intelligence was not considered last night as important as it proves to be this morning."

"I really cannot yet discover its momentous importance," observed General T., with a sneer; "the gallant major apprised us of what it was probable Humbert might do, but a worthy yeoman has told us what he has actually done." My father bowed coldly, while the commander proceeded:—"From his satisfactory report, we have made the necessary arrangements. It is idle to waste more words, and the sooner we move the better. We are perfectly agreed as to our position, General H.?"—"Oh certainly."

"Might I, without being guilty of presumption, inquire where you intend to oppose the enemy?" said my father to General H., who seemed anxious to make reparation for the scepticism with which he had received his tidings on the late visit.—"I cannot consent," replied General T., "that time should be wasted, while the curiosity of every private gentleman shall be gratified, who expresses a wish to canvass our intended operations."

My father coloured, and to the astonishment of all, sarcastically replied, "It may be true that my apparent curiosity merits the rebukes, which on more than one occasion I have received from the gallant general. But as I suspect that I shall change every part of his very able arrangements, I must take the liberty of repeating the question. I hope for an answer from General H. To him, and none other, do I address myself, and from him alone will I expect a reply. Is yonder gentleman your informant?" and he pointed to a yeoman in attendance. The general answered in the affirmative, while the aids-de-camp and field-officers closed round, to witness the result of what appeared a very singular scene.

"May I ask you, sir," said Cæsar Blake, as he addressed the loyalist, "*when* you last saw Humbert, and *where* you conceive he may be now?"—"I saw his advanced cavalry at the two-mile stone, on the Foxford road, and," as he looked at his watch, "he may now be within five or six miles of Castlebar."

"You are pretty correct," said the ex-major. A sneer crossed the features of General T. "And on what road is he advancing?" "*What road?*" returned the yeoman with a stare; "what, but the Foxford one? Would you have him swim up the lakes, or fly over the mountains?" General T. laughed heartily at the brusque reply, in which his staff, as in duty bound, united.

But Cæsar Blake abridged this merriment. "General H.," he said, "I must bear testimony to the truth of this gentleman's statement. I have no doubt whatever that he saw the French *à la distance*, and at the second mile-stone too; and, moreover, he has guessed their present distance with amazing accuracy. But as to *where* they are, he knows as much as the gallant general who is so tickled with his humour."

All started. "And in the devil's name *where are they?*" exclaimed General H.; while the countenances of the military conclave expressed unqualified astonishment.—"They are moving by the mountain-road, and over the pass of Barnagee; unless they meet more difficulties than I can anticipate."

"H—ll and fury!" roared General H., "we have sent our cavalry on the wrong road. Off,

Phillips," to an aid-de-camp, "ride for life and recall them. My dear fellow, you are fated to be our guardian angel. Give us the particulars."

"Willingly, sir. But the sooner your infantry commence moving, the better. I never saw faster marchers than the blue-coats. Of course, you will meet them outside the town."—"Assuredly. Go," to an aid-de-camp; "see the troops marched off without delay. And now the detail."

"When I left the barrack this morning," continued the ex-major, "I found that to obtain accommodation in the town would be impossible, and rode out to the house of Carrow Keel. A herdsman, who had been despatched on the preceding evening to ascertain the security of cattle on a distant farm, observed the French advance from a high ground, and gave the alarm. I rode off to reconnoitre and satisfy myself whether his report was correct or not. From the summit of Barnagee I saw the enemy advancing, and waited there to ascertain their force. The ravine at the bottom of the hill checked the movement of the column. Their cannon stuck fast, and after much labour and delay, they only succeeded in bringing one gun across, and the other was abandoned. They are about a thousand infantry, a troop of hussars, with one curricle gun. And now, gentlemen, you have my news."

"By Heaven, you astonish me!" exclaimed General H., passionately; "let us mount and be doing. Blake, we owe you much."—"You owe me nothing, sir," said the ex-major, haughtily. "I was once the King's soldier; and however his worthy generals may deem proper to suspect my fidelity, had I one drop of rebel blood within my veins, I would shed it with as great satisfaction as that of any man," and my father's eye turned on General T., "no matter what his rank might be, who for a moment dared to question my devoted loyalty."

"Come, come, my dear friend," said General H., interrupting him, "sincerely I ask your pardon, for not treating your intelligence as it well merited. You shall act as my extra aid-de-camp."—"Excuse me, general; I once held the King's commission, and, if I keep my present sentiments, I shall never again subject myself to the insult I once received, in being obliged to retire on a flimsy pretext. I shall, notwithstanding, do my duty, and serve as a volunteer, until the issue of this day is over. Here is my friend, Captain Seymour; he may require a well-mounted messenger, and I shall attach myself to him."—"Just as you please, sir," replied General H., in turn offended at my father's rejection of acting on his staff. All left the room to accompany the troops, who were filing quickly off, and marching on *the Gap* road.

Cæsar Blake was speedily alongside the commandant of artillery.

"A pretty piece of work these twaddlers have made of it!" said Captain Seymour; "but for your arrival we should have been in full march for Foxford, and politely vacated this good town for the peaceable occupation of Monsieur Humbert. By Heaven! Blake, it is too bad, that fellows are entrusted with commands, who are as incompetent to perform their duties as yonder drum-boy. And that sulky ass T., how heartily I enjoyed his mortification! Would you believe it, he had the assurance yesterday, to point out some imaginary defect in the limbers of my guns! A fellow that scarcely knows a cascabal from a cartouch box. Are the French so few, and have they but a single field-piece?"

"I measured them with my eye," returned Cæsar Blake, "while they marched more than a mile; they were in column, and I have seen a strong regiment cover more ground. They had but two guns; one of them they abandoned in a gully, for I saw them attach the horses to the limber of that they disengaged, and with this assistance carry it over the pass."

"We should annihilate them," said Seymour; "and yet, Blake, I have a strange misgiving as to the result. Look at the Longfords there," and he pointed out a militia-regiment marching immediately in the rear of the guns. "How sulky the scoundrels look! Were they well-affected, they would go into action with other countenances. I trust I may be wrong, but I fear a disastrous issue from drunken generals and disaffected soldiers. But here, as it would appear, is to be our position;" as the leading regiments deployed to the left of the road, adjacent to the village of Roebawn. "Every man to his own trade," continued the captain of artillery. "Ay, let me see,"—and he laid his telescope to his eye. "Fifty yards farther, the guns will have yonder height, which the road crosses, within good round-shot range"—and Seymour unlimbered, and prepared for action.

The position taken up was badly chosen, and worse defended. Part of the infantry was injudiciously extended, and another was crowded together, and from want of space were unable to deploy. The extreme left was the weakest point, as in front and flank the ground was covered with rocks and thickets, which would favour an enemy's advance, unless occupied with light infantry and sharpshooters. Here, by a singular stupidity, two raw Irish regiments were placed in line, where an able officer would have posted the best troops he could rely upon. As the cavalry came up, they were stationed in the rear of the right and centre; but from the nature of the ground they remained non-combatants.

The whole front of the position was broken, rocky, and difficult, and no place could have been better chosen for the operations of irregular troops. A numerous body of yeomanry and gentlemen volunteers had attached themselves to the garrison of Castlebar. They were capital marksmen, bold, hardy, and enthusiastic, and admirably adapted for every purpose of guerilla warfare; while in line, from want of discipline, they could be of little service. With these skirmishers, the generals might have thickly covered their front and flank. But this advantage was overlooked; and the two arms in which they were most powerful, and their assailants miserably deficient—cavalry and sharpshooters, were never employed.

How truly the drama of life may be termed serio-comic, and how often do the most ridiculous events interrupt its gravest business! The dispositions of the English commandant had been just completed, when, over the rising ground, in front of the guns, a man in a sort of hussar jacket, was seen careering at full speed. His appearance at first was so equivocal, that a score of muskets were levelled before he was recognized to be a member of a corps of mounted yeomanry. His dress and hurry bespoke mortal terror; his belts

were crossed on the wrong side, and reversing the usual mode of putting a helmet on, he had placed the peak behind, apparently to protect his rear. His own alarm had extended to the steed, who was running his best, while every bound of the horseman's scabbard urged him to increased velocity. On he came, as if determined to charge the guns, till, fortunately, when within twenty yards, an open field-gate allowed the steed to bolt, which he did so suddenly, as to tilt the rider into a deep ditch. The fall, however, was so cleverly accomplished, that this brave auxiliary received no personal damage. "Murder! Murder!" he ejaculated as he gathered himself up, "it's a wonder they did not catch me; there's twenty thousand of them at the bottom of the brae!"

The information of the unlucky chasseur only elicited a roar of laughter; and the holy warrior —for he was a churchman—bustled to the rear as fast as his own portliness and want of wind would permit.

At this moment another horseman crossed the ridge and rode rapidly down the road. "This looks more like business," said Seymour to my father; as the vidette came on at a long trot, and announced the immediate approach of the enemy.

A dead silence was observed — five minutes passed—suddenly the bear-skin caps of the French grenadiers rose over the ridge of the hill, and the head of the column filling the whole breadth of the road, displayed itself!

The guns had been carefully laid, and Seymour threw his eye along the right-hand piece — "Fire!" he said deliberately—the gun flashed— its sullen boom was repeated by the mountain echoes, as its round-shot pitched with beautiful precision directly into the column, knocking over half a dozen files. Instantly the French fell back over the shelter of the hill to re-form. Short was the respite. The bear-skin caps crossed the ridge again, and again the roar of the gun was heard, and the same effect obliged the column to retire.

Humbert, when he was a second time repulsed, covering the French with a body of insurgents in blue uniforms, pushed them forward under the leading of a favourite aid-de-camp. The column again appeared, and a third shot falling upon the road, raised a cloud of dust, and in its *ricoche*, ploughed through the dense mass. This was the most fatal discharge; the rebels broke, ran off tumultuously, and the French fell back to re-form.

Three rounds of a six-pounder had half defeated Humbert, and the battle was nearly won. When the French general had first seen the troops before him, he would have fallen back upon the pass, but retreat with him was ruin. Desperate as his chances were, he determined, at last, to make a movement or two before surrender, and sustain the high character he had acquired in the campaign of Italy. When he decided on making an effort, the beautiful service of the British guns astounded him; his column, arrested by the cannonade, could not even cross the heights; to move down the road, under the fire of these guns, would be hazardous in the extreme; and in close column too, if round-shot distance was destructive, what might not be dreaded when within range of grape and canister?

As a last effort, he changed his intended attack altogether; withdrew his column, replaced it with a mob of rebel auxiliaries; and directing one of his staff to lead the luckless rabble on, and thus draw upon them the fire of the guns, under cover of the ditches he made a rapid flank movement, which his extended order of attack, and the advance of the insurgent mob, protected from the artillery, which he had already found so formidable.

At this moment a singular panic seized, or appeared to seize, the suspected regiments, who held the left of the position. They opened their fire at a distance when it was totally inefficient; alarm or disaffection could only cause this strange proceeding; Humbert guessed the true cause, and seized upon that only chance of victory.

Pushing on his voltigeurs at double-quick, he gained the broken ground on the left of the Longford regiment, and succeeded in outflanking it. Then the fortune of the day turned, and a scene, never, thank God! witnessed before or since ensued. The Longfords, without discharging a musket, threw down their firelocks, and went over by companies to the French. The Kerry, next on their right, followed the example, and a general panic spread through the whole line. Then it was that the wretched imbeciles in command were found wanting: enough of well-affected troops remained to have remedied the disorder, and redeemed the day; but, from actual incompetence, the generals could not rally and re-form them. A retreat was hastily commanded; and disgraceful as the order was, it was tenfold aggravated in the execution. The cavalry, who had neither drawn a sword, nor discharged a carbine, instead of retiring leisurely on the town, went off at full trot, disorganising by their reckless haste a regiment in reserve behind them. The retreat, or, correctly speaking, the rout, became universal; and General ——— was seen amongst the foremost files of the flying horsemen.

Meantime my father and the commandant of the artillery could scarcely believe their senses. A few muskets had been discharged, hardly a man was hit, and the army was deserting the field pellmell. Seymour had held the road against every attempt which the French or the allies had made to advance upon it, and when he noticed the flanking movement, turned his fire upon the left of the enemy; but, seeing the infantry give way, and deserted by the dragoons altogether, he had no alternative left but to retire the guns or lose them.

"Limber-up, lads!" he said, "and be moving;" and as the drivers attached the horses, the rebels on the hill, observing the artillery about to retreat, poured across the ridge in hundreds. But their tumultuary advance was as promptly interrupted. Seymour unlimbered in a second, and opened with grape upon the rabble; the shot *laned* the road, and the insurgents, terror-stricken, threw themselves across the ditches or fled for shelter behind the hill. To the troops, disorganised as they were, a mob-attack might have been ruinous; but this severe check gave the rear regiment a little time, and enabled it to disengage itself.

"Pretty affair this, Blake," said he of the artillery; "no wonder my heart was heavy this morning; and yet, God knows! I little anticipated

the fulness of our disgrace. Curse on all fools! give me the Highlanders and yeomanry, my own guns, a fair field, and no general, and I would suffer myself to be blown from a six-pounder, if we did not beat those few French and the horde of banditti that run after them. I hope old Cornwallis, when he does arrive, if that event ever happen, will hang up cowards and rebels indiscriminately. I know at which end he should begin: it is no treason, I hope, to speak of one's superior officer after he has fairly run away."

At this moment an aid-de-camp rode up.

"Pray, Captain Seymour, can you tell me where General ——— is, or where I am most likely to fall in with him?"—"As to where he is," replied Seymour, dryly, "much, I imagine, depends upon the speed and endurance of his horse. Where he will be found, is a puzzler; I would recommend you to try Athlone."—"Athlone! why, it's eighty miles off."—"And yet, notwithstanding the distance," continued the captain, "I shrewdly suspect, judging from the haste with which he started, he will hardly stop short of that city."

"Well," said the aid-de-camp, "it's rather too far for a morning ride, and I shall content myself with the intelligence of his safety."—Safe he is," said the commandant of artillery, "from all casualties, save and except those attendant on rough-riding and ill-stuffed saddles. But, pray, what is to be done?—and are we to run too?—for the order of the day appears to be 'devil take the hindmost!'"

"It is a deadly shame," observed a yeoman, "to give up the town, when, with a few troops, we could defend it. Could we hold it, Captain Seymour, think you, until the generals will rally some of the runaways?"—"We should in that case, I imagine, hold it to eternity. But we have some honest fellows about us, that appear not to quite relish this new trick of running."—"Let us then," said my father, "make good the bridge, and depend on some chance shaming these refugees to return."

"Be it so," said Seymour, as he halted on the bridge, and unlimbered his cannon, while a few of the Frazer fencibles and Donnegals, with some dozen gentlemen volunteers, who remarked the beautiful service of the artillery, and stuck to it as a last hope, took post beside the guns. "Come, Cæsar, this is our position for a while; and if the rascals come on stoutly, we'll make some of them pay toll before they cross the river."

Nearly all the troops had cleared the town before this remnant of the royalists occupied the bridge. A few stragglers still came past; but none of them, with one or two exceptions, stopped with the defenders of Castlebar. The last of the refugees ran over, as on the crest of the lofty suburb called Staball, the foremost of the rebels appeared in full pursuit; but one round of grape was sufficient to stop them. Instantly they abandoned the open streets, and endeavoured to penetrate bylanes and byways, which would shelter them from the artillery.

"They have not forgotten the lesson we taught them before the rout," said the commandant of the guns, as he remarked the caution of the rebel advance. "Is the river equally shallow all round the town?"—"It is fordable everywhere," replied a private yeoman.—"Then our stay here will be but a short one," was the remark, and the words were indeed soon realized.

A few hussars showed for a moment on the height, and Seymour had just got a gun to bear upon them, when from either side, from yards, houses, and lanes, a close and well-sustained *fusilade* commenced. Two or three matrosses and Frazers dropped, and it was evident that the enemy were in full possession of the suburb. In vain the royalists returned the fire briskly, and the guns, sweeping the heights in front, prevented a Frenchman from advancing; but, under shelter of the houses, the insurgents suffered little loss, while the defenders of the bridge were falling momentarily.

"This will not last," said Seymour to his companion; "all hope of support is over: what is to be done?"—"Retreat instantly!" exclaimed the major, as he pointed to a body of rebels fording the river below and above the bridge simultaneously, while two or three dropping shots were heard directly from the street behind them. "They have got through the gardens, and are already in our rear. Limber-up, or the guns are lost!"

And so it was fated. Orders were promptly issued and obeyed, and the horses were being attached, when a small party of French cavalry approaching by a cross street, galloped suddenly out in front of the cannon.

"Stand fast, lads!" exclaimed my father: "give them a parting round!"

But while he spoke, a body of insurgents, who, under cover of a garden-wall, had crept forward unperceived, threw open a gate beside the bridge, and mixed pellmell with the royalists. A short and bloody contest succeeded; the drivers in the *mêlée* were knocked from their saddles; and the horses, pricked with pikes and bayonets, became ungovernable, and went off at speed. The guns were lost, but Seymour endeavoured to spike them—the few royalists were forced by numbers over the bridge—and the brave commander hemmed in on every side.

My father, who till now remained on foot, sprang on his horse, which he had secured in a gateway out of the line of fire. He saw his brave associate, with a few Frazers and artillerymen, making a fierce resistance, and resolved to try and bring him off. Dashing the spurs in his charger, and overturning one or two of the assailants, he reached him for a second; but he was already down, and received his death wound under the cannon that he had so nobly defended. Save he could not; but Cæsar Blake avenged him. One ruffian, more remarkable than the rest for his size and ferocity, after giving the fallen officer a mortal stab, shortened his weapon to repeat the thrust. His hat had been struck off in the fray, and he was stooping under my father's sword-arm. With one sweeping cut, the sabre fell upon the ruffian's naked skull, and he fell a dead man on the lifeless body of his victim. Instantly reining round, the major forced his passage through the crowd, and galloped down the street, leaving the hard-contested bridge in possession of the enemy.

The town was filling fast from every side with rebels, and my father's escape was indeed miraculous, as several stragglers fired at him from the houses as he rode off.

And yet this disgraceful day was not without

its examples of individual heroism. When Cæsar Blake looked back, the whole suburb was filled with blue uniforms and frieze coats. The street before him was tolerably clear, excepting that part immediately in front of the jail, where a score or two of rebels were endeavouring to break in; and where, to judge from a spattering fire, they had met with some effective opposition. My father, galloping up, alarmed the mob, who retired into an adjoining lane; and he then ascertained that the unequal contest had lain between the rebels and a solitary Frazer fencible. The latter had been sentinel at the prison-gate, and, favoured by the high steps and iron palisades, had defended his post most gallantly, and, as a couple of dead rebels told, not without effect.

"Come away, my brave fellow—resistance is madness—the town is all their own. Jump up behind me!" exclaimed the royalist.—"Na, sir," coolly returned the Highlander, "I munna lave my post."

There was no time allowed for further parley. Short as the delay was, it nearly proved fatal to my father, as the rebels, in increased force, rushed from the lane, and again assailed the prison. One drunken scoundrel, seizing the major's bridle, clung to his horse with such desperate tenacity, as nearly to bring him to his knees, and in another moment he would have been surrounded. Fortunately, the rider had reserved a loaded pistol: quickly, but coolly, he pressed the muzzle against the ruffian's head; the discharge blew it almost to atoms; and the horse, liberated from the dead man's grasp, sprang across the body, and bore the royalist away at speed.

My father looked behind him; the mob were now within the palisades: next moment the sentry-box was hurled down the steps, and a score of sanguinary insurgents appeared pushing with pikes and muskets at some prostrate object. Cæsar Blake easily conjectured that the victim of the rabble was the gallant and devoted Highlander.

CHAPTER X.

A SKIRMISH.—THE RETURN.

"Juan, by some strange chance, which oft divides
Warrior from warrior in their grim career,
Like chastest wives from constant husbands' sides,
Just at the close of the first bridal year,
By one of those old turns of Fortune's tides,
Was on a sudden rather puzzled here,
When after a good deal of heavy firing,
He found himself alone, and friends retiring,
* * * * * *
'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come."
Don Juan.

WHEN my father cleared the town, he found himself upon the same road by which the great mass of the fugitive soldiery had retired. Certain indications of a recent defeat were everywhere visible; broken carriages, scattered arms, disabled horses, and deserted baggage, proclaimed a routed, and not a retreating army. Amid all this abandoned *matériel*, not a wounded man was to be seen. In fact, little loss had been sustained by any but the defenders of the bridge, as scarcely a man had fallen, when a disgraceful flight from an unfought field commenced.

Cæsar Blake felt a momentary indecision whither to direct his course. No military obligation bound him, a free agent, to follow the fortunes of a routed army. Any useless display of loyalty was unnecessary—he had done his duty, and the breath of calumny dared not attach to his name the imputation of disaffection. There were also private, but powerful calls for his exertions. He had a wife to protect, a household to watch over. His mountain-home, now doubly dear, would, were he absent, be exposed to spoliation by countless vagabonds, whom the insurgent success would encourage to break loose upon the world. His resolution was promptly taken, and he determined to return to the highlands, and await coming events there.

Well acquainted with the vicinage, he left the high road, and striking into a by-path, directed his route towards the mountains. To cross the country, and avoid the open roads, was desirable, both for safety and expedition. The bogs, generally impassable, even to footmen, from the long continuance of dry weather had become firm and safe; his horse, notwithstanding the morning's fatigue, was still untired; and conjecturing that the victorious rebels would speedily throw themselves on the line of the royalist retreat, in quest of plunder and prisoners, the horseman pushed briskly on to gain a rising ground, where, removed from all pursuit, he might refresh his horse, and observe what passed for miles around.

No rider but one intimately acquainted with the localities of the country, would venture to cross the morass that lay between the town and the hillock where Cæsar Blake established his temporary bivouac. Though within sight of Castlebar, yet was he in perfect security. A field of corn in stacks covered the crest of the rising ground—here he alighted, and unbridling his horse, supplied him plentifully with provender; then, having reloaded his pistols, he stretched himself upon some loose sheaves, and proceeded to refresh himself with a few biscuits, and a well-filled canteen.

The unusual sultriness of the day rendered repose as necessary for the rider as the steed. A breathing space after the excitement and fatigue, mental and bodily, which my father had endured, was now inexpressibly luxurious; and while thus reclining on the hillock, he was fated to witness the closing scene of the disgraceful affair of Castlebar.

The great road, for many miles, was within his view, and he observed a body of dragoons halted on a height, to watch and report the ulterior movements of the enemy. Presently some straggling rebels issued from the town—large bodies of these irregulars followed—lastly, a small party of French hussars appeared, who, when they perceived the rival cavalry, rode briskly forward, while the dragoons as slowly retired on their approach.

The unexpected success of the morning had stimulated the national audacity of the French to a pitch of daring that no military *esprit* could warrant. Notwithstanding the great disparity in force, at sight of the red-jackets, they spurred forward to attack them. The royalists observed their careless advance, their scanty force, and that they were wholly unsupported. Falling back behind the crest of the hill, they formed, and unseen by the hussars, coolly awaited their coming up; while the French, never supposing

the royalists were halted, pressed their jaded horses on. Nor were they undeceived until they found themselves on the summit of the height, charged and overthrown by a fresh and superior force. Their resistance was short and gallant; they were sabred, and the victors rode off without losing a man. The bodies of the unlucky chasseurs were interred by the peasantry on the spot; and the height on which they perished bears the appellation of *French Hill*, in memory of this fatal skirmish.

It appeared strange to my father afterwards, when he remembered with what indifference he viewed the encounter. He looked on with the coldness of an amateur, without being interested as to which should prove the conquerors. In fact, the pusillanimous behaviour of the carbineers had disgusted their late companion-in-arms, and Cæsar Blake hardly cared whether they repelled the attack, or were defeated; while the reckless gallantry of the fallen Frenchmen excited his admiration, and obtained for them a soldier's sympathy. He watched the brief but bloody contest to its close, and then mounting his horse, directed his course homewards.

He met no interruption: but as he passed through the inhabited country, he was frequently interrogated by the peasantry concerning the result of the engagement, which flying rumours, and a distant cannonade, informed them had been fought. They appeared restless, excited, and irresolute; but this state my father suspected would be of short duration; a general insurrection was inevitable, and he pushed on to reach his home, and prepare for defence or flight, as circumstances might require.

Although impatient to end his journey, the traveller could not effect it before night-fall. Evening found him in the highland valley, and the sun's last light fell upon the eagle's aerie, and sank behind the rocky summit of the mountain, when the rider bathed the limbs of his weary steed in the cool waters of the dark lake.

His heart throbbed with delight as he entered the pass, from which his beloved home would soon be visible. His route through the mountains had been most solitary, and for hours he saw no human face. The moon had not yet risen above the heights which overhung the rocky opening in the hill, and in the gloom he perceived two men directly in the road before him.

"Who goes there?" exclaimed the horseman.

"Holy Saint Patrick! it's himself," responded a well-known voice; and next moment, Denis O'Brien and an armed attendant rushed forward, seized his hand with that familiarity which, after perilous events, is held permissible, and both poured forth a thundering jubilation.—"And is it yourself, after all? and are ye safe and sound?" exclaimed the delighted valet. "Oh, murder! if I knew what to do, since I heard the first whisper of the battle—partly because I hadn't the luck of bein' there, and partly on account of her ladyship. Och! but the joy will kill her! Here have I mounted guard, for fear some runagade would slip past, and scar her honour's life out. Arrah, what news, *avourneein?* Is yourself safe, and which side won?"

"Safe I am," replied the horseman, "except a trifling bone-bruising; and we have been as well beaten as ever a pack of cowardly scoundrels deserved. But how is your lady?"

"Frightened to death, the crature!" replied Mr. O'Brien. "She says she saw something alarming in my face—though, God knows! whiniver I came in her sight, I strove to laugh, when my heart was brakin'; and ye would hear me a mile off, whistling like a blackbird, while the tune stuck like a bone in my throat, and nearly choked me. Och! what a comfort it was to get away and curse until I felt myself in Christian timper. And have the troops retrated, major? Maybe they'll have another shy to-morrow, and yer honor might spare me for a day or two?"

"I'll not belie them, friend Denis," replied the horseman, "by saying they retreated. They ran for it like men; and if the French can catch the slowest, then are they the smartest fellows that ever bore a firelock."

"*Run!*" exclaimed the astonished valet; "may the foul fiend lame them for life, the thieves of the world! But, sir, you must not go in, until I make her honour sensible that you are on the march. She's so narvous, the joy would be her death!" and off went Denis O'Brien, the harbinger of welcome news.

Poor Ellen had been a silent but a sincere mourner. It was impossible that she should not perceive that some unfortunate occurrence either impended or had occurred. Denis was a poor actor; his outward manifestations of gaiety were forced and unnatural, and ludicrously contrasted with anxieties that, in spite of all his efforts, were too evident to escape remark. The sudden departure and prolonged absence of her husband; the untimely arrival of the disabled man; the servants going about constantly armed; and the quiet but constant look-out upon the road, changed apprehension to certainty, and heralded to her uneasy mind the coming of disaster. Nor were her fears lessened, on overhearing Denis, who had dressed Conolly's wound, remark, that "it was much liker a bullet than a button-hole!"

My father having confided his tired horse to the servant, quietly approached his beautiful and beloved retreat. He ensconced himself within a clump of evergreens, from whence he could see the windows of the favourite sitting-room. It was a lovely and peaceful scene. The moonbeams were dancing merrily on the little lake, while, in varied shadowing, her fitful light appeared and disappeared over the mountain ridges. But the returning soldier had no eyes for gazing on what would form a painter's study. One object engrossed his sight and filled his heart, and that was his own gentle Ellen, who was standing in melancholy musing at the open casement. At this moment, Denis O'Brien was seen advancing.

"Well, Denis," said a sweet and melancholy voice, that thrilled through the listener's heart, "have you brought any tidings?"—"Arrah, the divil a news that's bad, anyhow, my lady. The master will be here to-morrow *for sartein*," replied the valet.

"Pshaw;—you told me he would be here this evening. I fear you are but amusing me, and have heard no intelligence."

"By this book!" and Mr. O'Brien tapped the barrel of the gun he carried on the hollow of his arm, "I was talking to a man that parted from his honor within this half hour. That is—I mane—Arrah! my lady, don't take a body up so quick. Says the chap to me, 'Denis, you know

you may put depindence in what I tell ye; the master's coming home, as fast as Splinterbar can carry him: and more betoken,' says he, 'in the battle he didn't get a scratch.'"

"The battle! What battle?"—"Arrah!—sorra battle, good or bad; but the French, you know——"

"What! French?"—"Death an ouns! don't be flustering yerself, my lady. Arrah! what put the French in my head? It's them rebels, the curse of Cromwell on them!"

"Rebels—French—the battle!"

My father had received sufficient evidence touching Denis's abilities as an ambassador, to induce him to supersede the valet as soon as possible. Stealing round the shrubbery, he entered the house without observation, and on tiptoe approached my mother at the window.

"Denis," she said, "you have made me very wretched. There is some mystery—some concealment. Is he well? is he coming? When? where? Oh! speak man! anything will be preferable to this uncertainty."

A gentle step was heard stealing across the carpet—a soft voice whispered something in her ear—she turned quickly, uttered a shriek of delight, and sprang into the extended arms of the traveller. "Cæsar! my own, my darling husband! and are you come safely back?"

"Why, upon my sowl! he is; and so I would have made you sinsible, if your ladyship had but patience. And now, the sooner the master gets his supper the better; for nothing, my lady, gives a man his appetite like a long ride or a good bating."

A month passed, and the rebellion was suppressed. Humbert held possession of Castlebar, until a combined movement of twenty thousand men, under the Marquis Cornwallis, obliged him to evacuate the town. After some able movements, and a great deal of severe marching, a spirited affair with the Limerick regiment at Coloony, brought the campaign to a close. The French surrendered prisoners of war; and the miserable wretches who accompanied them were hung or shot, according to the fancy of the general, or as either was most convenient.

In their beautiful retreat my parents remained undisturbed. Conolly recovered, and embarking in a smuggler, escaped to Holland, and thus avoided the fate that other leaders of the insurgents underwent.

If my father had any wish to follow the fortunes of the royalists during the short and sanguinary campaign that succeeded the rout of Castlebar, the interesting situation of his lady made his sojourn in the mountain-lodge indispensable, for an heir was promised. Without his wife's knowledge, he apprised her father of the circumstance, and made a strong appeal to him for forgiveness. It was unsuccessful; a cold and heartless answer was returned, that held out no hope of pardon, or betrayed any symptom of returning regard. He spoke of her as one dead; and alluding to her elopement, bitterly upbraided my father with her loss—

"You stole her from me; like a thief you stole her
At dead of night?"

Of course, the major concealed this unfortunate correspondence from his lady, but he redoubled his attentions, and Ellen was truly happy. Removed from the world neither of my parents appeared to have a wish ungratified; and never were two hearts more tenderly united than those of the ex-major and the fair runaway.

CHAPTER XI.

A STORM.—AN ESCAPE.—CONFESSION OF A FUGITIVE.

"Away! away! and on we dash!
Torrents less rapid and less rash."
Mazeppa.

"What dost thou require?
Rest, and a guide, and food, and fire!"
SCOTT.

"Short was the course his restlessness had run,
But long enough to leave him quite undone."
Lara.

IT was on the third evening after the French had surrendered at Ballinamuck, that an incident occurred which, from the confusion of the times, created no small alarm in the isolated household of Cæsar Blake.

The day was unusually sultry; any exertion out of doors was disagreeable and oppressive; the air felt like breathings from a furnace; dark clouds, surcharged with rain, canopied every hill-top; whilst distant mutterings from the ocean told that a tempest was on the wing. Presently, with one wild crash, the storm burst above the lodge, and a volume of water deluged the parched earth. Next minute, every rill and water-course was filled; and, tumbling from the heights, a hundred streams hid themselves in the dark bosom of Glencullen.

How grand an Alpine storm appears, when witnessed from a safe and sheltered spot! The roar of waters; the pealing of Heaven's artillery; flash succeeding flash gleaming over highland steep, or brightening the swollen surface of the river—till, spent by its own fury, the blaze is seen no more, and the thunder dies upon the ear in low and distant mutterings.

Thus passed the storm, leaving a cloudless sky behind; and a cooler and lovelier evening never gladdened a mountain solitude.

My mother was delighted, when her liege lord invited her to accompany him on an excursion up the lake; she to sketch mountain scenery, while he amused himself with angling. The air was balmy and delicious. Nature felt refreshed, the trouts sprang merrily, the coots sported gaily in the reeds, while the wild-duck piloted her infant-brood to their island retreat, when plashing oars apprised her of a man's approach. The sun was nearly setting, and produced among the broken hill-tops a splendid alternation of lights and shadows.

Just then, while my mother directed her husband's eyes to the picturesque appearance of a fissure in a range of heights whose bases touched the margin of the water, a human figure rushed through the pass at headlong speed, and hurried down the steep declivity. The cause was not long concealed; several soldiers crossed the hill, and discharged their muskets at the fugitive, who, apparently uninjured by the fire, outstripped his followers easily, and held on a course directly for the narrow union of the lakes, where my father's boat was laid upon her oars.

This unexpected chase produced an unexpected sensation: pencil and fishing-rod were abandoned; my father watched the pursuit with excited interest, and my mother with nervous apprehension.

On came the fugitive! He paused for a moment on a rising ground beside the lake, looked back at his pursuers, first levelled the gun he carried at the foremost, but, changing his determination, aimed at the second steadily; he fell—and, flinging his musket away, the runaway bounded across the hillock, leaped into the lake, buffeted the water gallantly, and pressed for the other shore.

My father's boat lay directly in his course, but owing to the shelter of a reedy islet, this circumstance escaped the notice of the fugitive. Too late he perceived it, and for a second paused from exertion; then, with a sudden resolution, stretched boldly out again. When he came within an oar's length, he laid his hand upon the blade, which a rower dropped on the surface to support him, and in a voice that told how violent his efforts at escape had been, he said.—

"You will not stop an unfortunate man, major?"

"Who are you?" asked my father.—"A rebel!" was the bold reply.

"You know me, it would seem."—"Ay, that I do; will you stop me?"

"I am no bloodhound," said Cæsar Blake; "push on, the Highlanders are on the beach. Keep the boat between you and them, for they are within good musket-range, and have reloaded."

"Cæsar Blake, I owe you a life: I may pay ye someway yet—God Almighty bless you, lady"—for my mother had earnestly joined the fugitive in his petition,—"I can only pray for you. Will you, major, give me a moment's breathing-time, before you ferry yon bloodhounds over?"

"I ferry them over! No—no.—It would be a poor exploit to crush a hunted enemy. Had I met you at Castlebar——"

"And so you did," returned the fugitive. "Ay, and the gun that did its business to the last, missed fire upon the bridge."

My mother shuddered. "Off!" cried the major, "and if all other places fail, at twilight you may find a crust at the lodge. But, hark; they halloo from the shore; and now, God speed thee, friend."—"Amen!" responded the runaway, as he dropped the oar, and with renewed vigour breasted the waters gallantly. He gained in a minute the opposite shore, and plunging into the reeds, disappeared in the broken ground that skirted that part of Glencullen.

Perceiving that the rebel had landed, my father directed his boatmen to pull in. The Highlanders, three in number, had remarked the escape of the fugitive, and irritated at the fall of their companion, whose leg had been broken by the outlaw's shot, halloaed more furiously, while more than once they threatened to fire on the boat.

"Why the de'il did ye na pull in, nor stop the villain on the water?" was the rough address of the corporal, as my father stepped ashore.

The major drew himself up, and haughtily replied, "Because I do not attend to the orders of such fellows."—"Fellows!" screamed the Highlander; "Ken ye, friend, who we be?"—"I may guess possibly. Pray *who* are you?"—"Wha am I?" returned the corporal, swelling with rage; "are ye blind? Know ye the colour of this coat, and ask sic silly questions. De'il ha' me, gin I would mind much sticcin the bagnet in ye!"

"If you did," said the master of the boatmen, "you would never draw another, Sawney." My mother grew pale as she watched the flashing eyes of the offended Celt. "Fear nothing, Ellen, the fellows do not know me. Scoundrel! I am your superior officer, and your insolence would fully warrant my leaving you to your fate. Look up! see you anything behind that distant hillock?"

The soldier turned round—his companions also looked attentively. The colour left their cheeks, their hands trembled; for at least threescore armed peasants were regularly extending themselves between the Highlanders and the hills, making retreat impossible, while to resist was madness.

"Scoundrel!" said my father, "because I would not strike down a drowning wretch, you would have fired at an innocent female, and assassinated the King's officer. What do you suspose your life is worth?"—"Little, I suspect," replied the Highlander, doggedly; "but at all events, I wun'na part with it chape. Look to your primings, lads: at least, we'll die like sodgers!"

"Gallantly spoken!" exclaimed Cæsar Blake; "that speech redeems your rashness. Die you shall not, nor shall insult or injury befall a comrade in these hills. Stand fast—order arms!"

The tone of voice in a moment told that the person who gave it was no pretender.

"We are at your command," said the Celt; "Lord sees, we could na guess that we should find an officer in these bleak mountains."—"'Twas well you did, or you were but lost men. Fear nothing. Stay, Ellen, here,—I leave you only for a few minutes."—"No, no, dear Cæsar! You must not venture among these wild men."

My father smiled. "I am safe, my pretty one, not a hand there will injure me;" and leaving the shore, he advanced to meet the armed body, who were surrounding the devoted Highlanders, with a caution and regularity that betokened their determination to prevent all chances of escape.

When the major was seen approaching, the leader of the party came forward.

"Prendergast! is it possible? You, who were hitherto so remarkable for good conduct in very turbulent times, are you going to turn rebel now, and attack the King's troops?"

"No, major," said the peasant; "you will allow that I have been a quiet and a peaceable man. But that poor fellow whom you saw driven to the lake, came a stranger, under trust, to my house for shelter. There's money on his head, I fancy; but I would rather die than see him taken off and hanged."

"He is safe for the present," replied my father. "Had I wished him harm, a blow from the oar would have saved all further trouble. I saved *him*, and I wish to save *you*. If you molest those soldiers, have you calculated what the consequences will be? Your houses will be burned, your property pillaged, yourselves hunted, hanged, or driven out upon the world, and your families beggared and undone."

"His honour's right," exclaimed several voices.

"Well, major, and what would you have us do?"—"Why, nothing, my good friends, but to just go quietly home; and the sooner pike and musket are again put in their hiding-places, the better. Where are the rest of the Highlanders?"—"Searching the next village for a priest from Costello, who was out, God pity him!" returned the leader.

"*I* don't pity him," rejoined my father; "had he attended to his duties, and discouraged rebellion among his flock, instead of inciting them to insurrection by his own pernicious example, many a wretch would escape the gallows who may well curse him. Go, tell the soldiers that their companions are safe, and that the wounded man shall be attended to; get a door,* and carry him with care to the lodge."

"Shah, shah—yes, yes," returned a dozen voices, now as solicitous to perform any act of kindness to the soldiers, as five minutes ago they were burning to assail them. Such is the versatile disposition of a people, whose passions have made them playthings for knaves and scoundrels to employ, and whose alternations from right to wrong are variable as the sunshine of "an April morn!"

With unfeigned pleasure, the expectant group upon the shore observed the peasantry retire, and my father return—all were speedily embarked, and the boat pulled rapidly to the lodge. The soldiers felt as men do when suddenly delivered from impending death, while my mother's blanched cheeks showed that she had not nerve to witness scenes where men's lives hung upon hair-breadth accidents—nor had her ears become sufficiently "Irish," to listen unmoved to the whistle of a musket-ball.

During the short passage down the lake, the Highland corporal explained the cause of this unexpected, and nearly disastrous expedition. A military detachment had been sent from Castlebar to occupy the village of Louisburgh, as it was contiguous to the mountains, where it was well known many of the rebels had concealed themselves. Two or three of the chief delinquents were especially pointed out, and a reward offered for their apprehension. In this list, *the fugitive* was conspicuous. As it turned out, he was not only in the neighbourhood, but appeared determined that on this point there should be no doubt whatever; for while the military were in active pursuit of him among the hills, he entered the village in their absence, tore down the paper that proclaimed him, and affixing it to the mill-door, amused himself and sundry spectators by *riddling* it with bullets. This audacious insult was too much for Highland blood to tolerate. Private information denounced the place he harboured; the village was surrounded, and favoured by accidental circumstances, the daring outlaw was nearly surprised asleep. He had only time to partially dress, seize his gun, and jump from a window. The military were all around; and though fired at within pistol-range, to the surprise of all he managed to escape.

It was not long before the rest of the Highlanders, guided by a peasant, joined their comrades; the disabled soldier was carefully carried in, and from the attention and hospitality bestowed upon the wounded and the weary, the party left the lodge next morning with very different sentiments towards Cæsar Blake than the stormy meeting on the shores of the lake foreboded.

It was nearly midnight; the house was quiet; for the tired soldiery, after ample refreshment and a free carouse, were buried in profound repose. My father had taken his rounds for the last time, to ascertain that all was secure, and was entering the hall, when from a clump of low shrubs, scarcely high enough to conceal a dog, a human voice pronounced his name in tones so low as to be almost inaudible. The major started, "Is there anybody there?" he exclaimed, "Speak!"—"It is I," replied the same low voice—"I, the runaway!"

"Hush!" said my father, "there are enemies in the house."—"I know it," replied the voice from the shrubbery; "but I watched them to their quarters, and heard their heavy breathing outside the door. They are asleep."

"Are you long here?"—"I am; I would have tapped upon the window, but feared, from the lateness of the hour, that the lady might be alarmed."

"You did well; remain there for a minute—I shall not be long absent."

Cæsar Blake briefly apprised his wife of the unexpected visit, and having closed the curtains of the drawing-room, and ascertained that no person was in the way to observe the stranger's entrance, he brought in the weary fugitive.

Had not my mother been prepared for this midnight interview, the appearance of the late guest might have startled one of stronger nerves. Surprised, and driven from his hiding-place, half-dressed, his shirt was torn in a struggle—for a Highlander had actually seized him, and a slight flesh-wound had discoloured it with blood. After the violent exertions of escaping, the wet clothes and chilling dew had benumbed his stiffened limbs; his teeth chattered; his hands shook; and his whole look bespoke cold, want, and weariness.

Yet the outlaw's spirit was unsubdued. He stood at the extremity of the apartment, and when my father filled a glass with brandy, and beckoned him to approach the table, he muttered something about "wet clothes" and "the lady's presence," as if, notwithstanding the extent of his suffering, his pride refused to permit a female eye to dwell upon his wretchedness.

"Come, my poor fellow; drink—that brandy will be serviceable; you must be chilled almost to death."

The outlaw took the glass, and respectfully drank to his host and the lady.

* As the doors in an Irish cottage are suspended upon hooks, they are easily removable, and contrived to discharge more than a "double debt." Laid across a tub, the door becomes *locum tenens* for the table—or laid upon the floor, wonderfully assists the salutations of a jig-dancer.

Many a cabin perforated with two orifices, only possesses a single door. Of course, it is applied to stop the *weather* opening in the wall, while the *lee* one must be contented with an old mat, a bunch of heather, a tattered creel, or any of "the thousand and one" shifts, which Irish ingenuity could alone devise. In case of accidents, the door becomes a litter for the sufferer, or a bier for the defunct. Hence, gentlemen who shuffle off this mortal coil in a steeplechase, or on the field of honour, are thus transported to a convenient place "to lie in state." From this it has become common to prophesy of a drunkard, a duellist, or a break-neck rider, that "on some blessed morning, he'll come home upon *a door!*"

"Ay, major, that is indeed a cordial," said the fugitive; "my heart warms anew, and the blood flows again through my veins!"

"I thought so," said the major; "and now I will entrust you to one who will supply your supper, and furnish you with a bed. In the morning we will talk further."—"Before morning," he replied, "I shall be many a mile from this."

"Is it so? Come, then, as time presses, what are your wants? speak boldly."—"Food," returned the outlaw, "clothing, and a short rest."

"All these shall be yours"—and my father rang the bell. Denis O'Brien answered it, and to him the fugitive was entrusted, with all necessary directions for attending to his safety and his wants.

This incident changed the major's purpose of retiring to bed. He wished to speak to the fugitive again, for the allusion to the affair of Castlebar had awakened his curiosity. A different feeling actuated my mother. In the stranger's looks there was something to interest, and much to alarm. She was anxious to see one whom she half feared and compassionated; and it is inconceivable how frequently in life these conflicting sentiments are found.

The delay was short. An hour had scarcely elapsed, when the stranger again presented himself. Denis had made a striking change in the outward man, by equipping him in a sporting-dress of his master, and he looked a different being.

The wanderer had scarcely reached manhood. Buoyant and vigorous as his youthful figure seemed, he was far from having achieved the gigantic strength, which his powerful frame promised to possess when it had matured. His face was handsome, his eye dark, his teeth regular, and his mouth well-formed—and yet the expression was on the whole unfavourable. Every line of that handsome countenance betrayed the workings of stormy and ungovernable passions, easy to excite, and difficult to allay. Whether it was that a bolder spirit had kindled with returning vigour, or that he felt himself no longer the abject fugitive, as when he crawled from his concealment, subdued by fatigue and paralysed by cold, he advanced boldly to his benefactors; and when he acknowledged the kindly reception he had gotten in his hour of need, the language in which he expressed his gratitude was very different from what an ordinary peasant would employ.

"Have you been sufficiently refreshed and rested?" said the major.—"I have, indeed," returned the fugitive, "been freely welcomed, and generously supplied with all I wished or wanted. I have nothing to ask, but that you will receive an outcast's blessing, and believe that James Murphy will never forget this night to you and yours. Lady, we may not meet again,"—for my mother had risen to leave the room,—"may you never require the only service that I could offer; but 'tis a strange world, and should you, may I be near to render it."

"And where do you purpose going?" said the major, as the door closed.—"To Connemara, replied the fugitive, "and join some fellows as wild and wretched as myself."

"Nay," said the major, "why persevere in crime, and why add fuel to the fire? The severity of government will in time relax: remain quiet, and you may yet be happy; you are young."—"Young I am," replied the fugitive; "I have only reckoned twenty summers, and yet am I a wanderer, a castaway, beyond recovery or redemption!"

"Pshaw, nonsense! The beard is not curled on your chin; what can you have done to render your honest chances in life so desperate? Attend to me: live quietly, Murphy; remain for a while in retirement. I am not, God knows! over wealthy—but still I can spare you enough to prevent any necessity, on your part, for taking to desperate means; and when a few months blow over, I will intercede, and gain your pardon."

"Cæsar Blake," said the outlaw, "we are alone. I owe you a life; and I am indebted for this welcome succour, without which the life you spared would have been a useless gift. But your intended kindness would be idle. Did I escape the Mall * in Castlebar, what would save me from the gallows in Clonmel?"—"I hardly understand you," said my father.

"Listen, then;" and the fugitive approached my father closely: "mine is as wild a tale as any you may have yet heard. My father was but a peasant"—He paused. "Hang it! one will feel those weaknesses! May I, under favour, trespass on your hospitality?" The major bowed; and the outlaw filled a goblet of port-wine, drank it, and continued:—"My father was a peasant, but he was a wealthy one. I was his only child; his ambition was to make me a priest, and he gave me a suitable education. I learned Latin freely: I loved books—read ardently, and soon discovered that I was not formed for a churchman. The calmness of the cloister was unsuited to a spirit wild as mine—I felt small ambition to fill a confessional, and listen to man's deceit and woman's frailty. Well, they found out that the church would not in me receive an ornament; and they devoted me to physic, and bound me to an apothecary in Longford. Alas! I had no fancy for dispensing drugs; physic was as little to my taste as divinity; I tired of anything like thraldom, and only waited for a decent apology to kick the shackles off. For that I did not tarry long, as my master saved me all trouble by discarding me. The truth must out: his daughter was seventeen, and his wife seven-and-thirty; both favoured me with their friendship, and I preferred the young one's. We were indiscreet; mamma was on the watch; our affair was discovered, denounced, and, what I sighed for most, the honest apothecary gave me—the door and my indentures.

"After this exploit, it was useless to return home. The second professional failure irritated my poor father; he affected to be displeased, and I determined to be independent. I was just eighteen the morning I wandered off, neither knowing nor caring which way I headed.

"In the course of a week's rambling, I found myself near a relative of my mother's, who was gamekeeper to Lord ——, and I thought I might as well visit him. I did so, and was hospitably received. He was getting old, had an infirm ankle; and, having discovered that I was a better shot than himself, persuaded me to become, for he present, his assistant, with a promise that, in

* A favourite hanging-place, during, and after the rebellion.

time, I should succeed him. It was a life that suited me well; I followed my own fancy—killed game, broke dogs, made love, sang, danced, hurled,* and was happy.

"This was but a fleeting hour; a gleam of sunshine before a thunder-storm." The outlaw stopped; he was for a moment agitated; but the feeling that caused it was quickly subdued, and he thus continued:—"My relative had an only daughter; she was about my own age, and, handsome as many of the southern peasants are, I never saw one who could compare with Rose Dwyer. Residing beneath the same roof, and constantly together, is it surprising that we loved? Mine was a passion that death alone could end—hers was, unfortunately, a transitory fancy.

"Christmas came: the castle was filled with company; the heir had completed his minority, and fêtes and rejoicings celebrated that great event. He returned from Oxford, and it was a fatal return for both him and me. He was a fine-looking young man, warm-hearted, affable, a sportsman, and I liked him. From the cradle he had been a spoiled child; from a boy his own master; he had been fashionably educated, and, of course, was fashionably profligate. From the moment he saw Rose Dwyer, he became fascinated with her beauty. I was not blind; but had I not observed it, his passion would have been no secret; for, in the familiarity of shooting condescension, he more than hinted, that the woman I designed to be a wife, he intended to make a mistress.

"It is useless to be particular. He found agents enough to assist in corrupting innocence; and every vulnerable point in Rose's character was vigorously assailed, and all means used to undermine her virtue. Presents and flattery were lavishly employed; yet, had I remained, I believe Rose would have resisted all solicitation; and, instead of becoming the plaything of a vicious peer, lived in honourable honesty the wife of the peasant's son.

"The secret was not long undiscovered as to how far my presence had rendered Lord William's plans abortive, and caused his overtures to be rejected. To win Rose, I must be removed. The young lord cared for me; but I was an obstacle to the attainment of a fancy—a thorn in his path of pleasure, and I must in some way be got rid of.

"This was rather difficult; I was a favourite with the old earl; I had committed no fault; and to part with me, without a reason, was impossible. But removed I must be, and that by underhand contrivances.

"Where the will exists, opportunity is seldom wanting long. It happened that I was sent by the keeper to the next town, to sell some deer and rabbit-skins. A false villain—a creature of Lord William, and one who cordially hated me for the favour I held in the sight of the old earl—accompanied me. We disposed of the skins, and went to a public-house to refresh ourselves—I was an unsuspicious fool, and he an artful scoundrel. He managed to intoxicate me; bribed a crimp, brought him in, slipped a shilling into my pocket, swore I had been regularly enlisted, and, before I was sufficiently sobered to comprehend their villainy, I was marched off with some other wretches under a military guard, conveyed to Cork, and shipped directly off to Bristol.

"I detain you, major; but I will hurry to the close. With my feelings I will not trouble you. Imagine a caged tiger, who pants to spring upon his keeper, but finds the bars prevent it. I knew at once the villany practised upon me; I guessed the ruin preparing for another. The scheme was clear; and I swore if I could not mar, I would revenge it deeply.

"My resolution, of course, was to desert from the regiment, and return to Ireland.

"Passion overcame prudence. I made the attempt too rashly; was betrayed, overpowered, retaken, and brought back a prisoner, after having wounded four soldiers engaged in securing me.

"Well, the result was——" The fugitive paused, grew pale as death, his eyes glared, his brows united. "Come, this is weakness," he gasped out. "You, a soldier, will guess the consequence—*the halberts!* Major—ay, to the halberts was I doomed! I was tied up before a thousand lookers-on, and received five hundred lashes, honestly counted and vigorously inflicted. They excoriated my back, but they could not break my spirit. I placed a musket-bullet between my teeth, and never gratified my tormentors with a groan!

"Did a failure make me renounce my resolution? Oh no! Had they cut a limb off, I would have dragged the mutilated carcass to the place where I had been injured and disgraced, and I would have had revenge.

"Accident, happily, assisted me to effect my escape from Bristol. The first morning I crawled from the hospital, I met an Irish sailor in the street. I heard him speak in my native language; I followed him, told him how I had been kidnapped, and implored him to assist me in returning. He did so; privately supplied me with jacket and trousers, smuggled me on board, concealed me in the hold, and divided his grub and grog as liberally as if I had been a brother: and while my tender-hearted judges believed me, for weeks to come, the tenant of an hospital, I was hurrying back—too late to save Rose Dwyer from disgrace, but not too late to exact a desperate revenge.

"I did not delay an hour in Waterford, but started for Oak Wood, the earl's residence. I reached the termination of my journey after dark, and sought the dwelling of a park-keeper, who owed me some obligations, and mortally hated Halligan, the scoundrel who had betrayed me to the crimp. I was kindly welcomed; my back dressed, and I was accommodated with everything I needed. To my repeated inquiries I received reluctant answers. My worst fears were confirmed—Rose Dwyer had fallen!

"Wearied as I was, I tossed upon a restless bed—hell burned in my breast—my brain was fired—my blood felt like molten lead—and blood alone could calm the demon spirit that filled my tortured bosom.

"The next day passed, although I thought it endless. I had learned all the particulars of the seduction of the woman I once idolised. Worthless as she was, I did not curse her; and I thought of her fall, more in sorrow than in anger.

"She was now residing in a beautiful cottage

* *Hurling* is a fine manly game practised in the south and west of Ireland.

in a remote part of the domain, Halligan and his wife her sole companions. The old lord was willingly blind to the affair which the younger one took no pains in concealing. He spared no expense in decking out his victim, drove her openly about; and she appeared, as they told me, insensible to her disgrace, and displayed in public her ill-acquired finery—the wages of guilt and shame.

"Night came at last—never did expecting lover sigh for it more ardently than I. None knew every coppice and skirting in the park better; and, by a devious path through clumps and underwood, I reached unseen the cottage of my worthless love.

"It was well lighted, but the closed curtains prevented me from observing those within. I waited two long, long hours. There was occasionally noise, and mirth, and bustle. I heard Rose laugh joyously. Poor wretch! little did she foresee how soon that light laugh would turn to tears and wailing.

"I stood in a belt of evergreens that shut out the cottage from the view of the road, and the door was within a few paces. Presently I heard a horse-tramp in the rear: and Halligan came round with a lantern in his hand, leading Lord William's favourite pony. My hand crept to my bosom, where my pistols were concealed, when I saw the villanous agent of all my misery. But the door opened, and Rose, splendidly dressed, stood beside her seducer. She held a lighted candle; and when I think how like an angel she looked, my brain yet burns. 'Farewell,' she said, 'farewell, my William.' *My William!* By Heaven! major, that phrase agonised my soul more than five hundred stripes had tortured my body. 'And shall I ride the sorrel mare to-morrow?' He whispered something in her ear; she blushed, smiled, turned her rosy lips to his, and kissed him ardently. I could see no more. The foul fiend's breast never felt more hellishly than mine. I levelled a pistol, drew the trigger, and next moment Lord William was in eternity—and on the bosom of the woman he had ruined the last sigh of the seducer escaped.

"I did not conceal myself; I strode from my ambush; I stood over my fallen rival, while Rose, uttering piercing shrieks, dropped in convulsions on the lifeless body of her noble paramour. I was cool, unmoved; ay, more collected than while I now relate the tale. Halligan had fled. I seized the bridle of Lord William's pony, mounted, rode off to the mountains; and long before morning was safe from pursuit.

"My story is nearly ended. The young lord's murder was generally imputed to political causes, and a thousand pounds were offered for the apprehension of the assassin. I eluded all attempts to take me, headed a body of insurgents, and, finally, joined the French."

"What became of the wretched cause of all this blood and misery?" said the host.

"Poor girl! I cannot but pity her still. The old earl was distracted, and attributed the loss of his son to the fatal connection he had formed. Rose was disgracefully turned out of her gay residence. The villain Halligan plundered her of all her ill-acquired valuables, for she had none to befriend or shelter her. She was loathed, execrated, persecuted—and driven desperate, she died by her own hand; her uncoffined remains were cast into a hole in the high-road; and a common grave refused to the remains of her, who had once been so lovely—and once so ardently beloved!

"I have done, major; the rest is of no moment. You have heard what no human ear shall ever hear, '*the fugitive's Confession.*' You have repaid evil with good. I assailed you on the bridge of Castlebar; and twice, the gun that never failed before, was snapped at you ineffectually, within a dozen paces. Farewell, major; the prayer of such a wretch as I would not be heard; but may you be happy! and when you hear Murphy 'the murderer' cursed—remember the wrongs that roused him—the deliberate villainy that drew down his just vengeance!"

He caught my father's hand, wrung it with a wild grasp, rushed from the room, and was hidden in the plantations.

While the major was still pondering over the tale of blood, Denis O'Brien cautiously peeped into the apartment.

"Arrah! and are ye alone? Is he gone, the devil?"

"Devil you may well term him; and yet that wretch, but for the crimes of others, might not have been more criminal than his fellow men. I hope you took care of him, Denis?"—"Faith! and that I did," replied the valet; "mate and drink he had *galore*, and for-by a good suit of clothes, I gave him the owld carbine, just to keep in his hand by the way of company, until he can stale a better gun."

"There you did wrong," said the master; "we are bound to give food and shelter to the wretched—but to arm the King's enemy! it was wrong, Denis."—"Why then, and maybe it was," said Mr. O'Brien, "and I niver thought of that, good or bad. But when the cratur told me he was goin' into Connemara, to join the biggest thieves under the canopy,* why, it would be worse than murder to let him among them without something in his fist. They say that a cat in hell without claws has no chance at all, at all; and sure Connemara's worse, and that everybody allows."

Denis's logic was unanswerable, and my father said no more, but retired to his chamber.

CHAPTER XII.

PROMOTION.—A CHRISTENING.

"What have we
Done, that we must be victims for a deed
Before our birth?"

Cain.

"Al Hassan's brow
Is brightened with unusual joy—
What mighty mischief glads him now,
Who never smiles but to destroy?"

MOORE.

AUTUMN passed, the trees were in the sear and yellow leaf, and frequent gales from the stormy west swept their falling honours along the valley, as if to intimate that the dreary season of the "dying year" was come. Other indications of icy winter were frequent. The woodcock sprang from the evergreens, the snow-birds flocked upon the sand-hills, snipes and field-fares arrived in

* A Connaught abbreviation for "under the canopy of heaven."

numbers, and wild geese and barnacles were nightly heard in their passage to the feeding-grounds, as they directed their clamorous flight from the lake to the fens.

The time, indeed, had come when the lodge must be exchanged for the town; and that, too, for other causes than inclemency of weather. The country was disturbed by marauders; and the mountain-districts infested by proclaimed rebels, or deserters from the King's troops; who, rendered desperate when the French surrendered, scattered over the province, to screen themselves from the merited vengeance which their treachery and disaffection had incurred. Connemara, wild, lawless, and almost without the pale of civilization, was a safe and favourite haunt for all malefactors; and its proximity to the lodge greatly increased the insecurity of the latter. My mother's approaching accouchement made a town residence indispensable. A house was accordingly engaged in Castlebar—and leaving Denis O'Brien in charge of the garrison, Cæsar Blake and his lady bade, as they believed, a temporary farewell to their mountain home. But it proved to be an eternal one!

It was on a fine November day that they left the highlands. The sun was sparkling on the summits of the hills, which a recent snow-shower had slightly sprinkled. The stream from the lake had changed its character, and swollen by autumnal floods, appeared now a goodly river. Though the heath was darkened, and the trees leafless, there was still a quiet and romantic beauty in this lonely landscape, which winter could not destroy. To my mother, her mountain-home appeared lovelier than ever, probably because she felt a presentiment that she was leaving it for ever.

While she was gazing on hill and lake and river, with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret, my father's quick eye detected the advance of a military rider. The sunbeams *glinted* from his helmet and steel scabbard, and announced him to be an orderly dragoon. On the approach of the carriage, the horseman pulled up, and taking a packet from his sabretash, delivered it to the major. Cæsar Blake broke the seal; the despatch merely contained a letter of congratulation from the commanding officer at Castlebar, and enclosed a newspaper. My father turned to the gazette; there his name appeared as promoted to a lieutenant-colonelcy, with an appointment to the 5th regiment, then in India, but under orders for Europe. His gallantry at Castlebar, it appeared, had not been overlooked. General H. made honourable mention of his services; and in consequence he was restored to active service, with additional rank. His promotion, unsolicited and unexpected, was therefore doubly dear to a soldier's feelings; and with excusable pride he announced it to his beautiful companion.

But the web of life is at best a tangled and party-coloured concern. While my father's eyes were sparkling with delight, he observed my mother's cheek grow pale, as the paper she had been looking over dropped from her powerless hand.

"Are you ill, dearest?" exclaimed the colonel eagerly. She could not reply, but pointed to a paragraph which had escaped his notice. He read it, and it announced her father's marriage.

This was indeed an unforeseen calamity, and many a cherished hope of future pardon was rudely annihilated. From Mr. Harrison's avowed disinclination to enter a second time into matrimonial engagements, it was rather an act of vengeance and displeasure, than the result of fancy or free-will. He disliked woman's society; he feared a woman's thrall; he avowed those feelings, and for seventeen years had acted on their impulse. What now could change his sentiments, and remove prejudices which through life he fostered? The motive was too apparent—to cut from all hope of inheritance his offending daughter and her unborn offspring. My mother nearly sunk beneath the blow; but my father bore it manfully. Every exertion to cheer and console his gentle partner was tried, and his efforts were not without success.

It would appear that from contingent inheritances fortune had determined to cut my father off. Manus Blake had been ten years a benedict, and no family had blessed his union. His brothers, next in remainder, were not likely, from taste or profession, to enter into wedlock. Great, then, was the gallant colonel's astonishment when a letter from the lord of Castle Blake announced the happy tidings that his lady was "as ladies wish to be."

Time passed, my mother was safely confined, and I ushered into this "whirligig world." At the baptismal font I was, in the presence of a score of Blakes, Burkes, Browns, and Bodkins, denominated "John." Both my grandsires rejoiced in this unpretending appellation; and which of the twain it was intended to honour, I never heard and never inquired. Well would it have been for me had any saint in the calendar been selected for my patron rather than the Baptist; and this my memoirs will prove.

In due time, Manus Blake's helpmate produced a boy; and, as Southey sings, "there was joy in Aztlan." Now, Manus venerated his father's memory, and the heir of Castle Blake was therefore designated by the same name that had already been bestowed on me.

If my baptism had been honoured by the heads of divers clans, and representatives from all the tribes, it may be well imagined what a momentous affair the christening of the heir of our ancient house was. All kith, kin and relations, even to the third and fourth generation, were bidden; and, of course, my parents were duly summoned. My mother's health was not sufficiently established to permit her venturing from home, and the colonel was obliged to attend the ceremonial without her. Deeply he regretted it; and had it been possible to be absent without giving mortal offence to his kind-hearted brother, he would have excused himself. To go was unavoidable: with a heavy heart he bade his beloved Ellen an affectionate farewell, and set out with a presentiment of impending misfortune—for one whom he should avoid was there—the wife of his deadly enemy, and his quondam admirer, Harriette Kirwan. Little did Manus Blake anticipate the misery which his unconscious agency would bring about, when he invited his new neighbours, the Donovans, to meet his favourite brother.

The property to which Mr. Donovan had become accidentally the heir, adjoined the estates of Castle Blake, and shortly after his marriage, he came down with his beautiful bride to take a

formal possession. Anxious as he was to obtain with his new acquirement a footing among the aristocracy, he knew that this was only to be effected through his wife's connection with the leading families. At first, he kept aloof from my uncle; but speedily discovering that without his countenance, his assumed caste could not be maintained, he changed his tactics, and endeavoured to conciliate the lord of Castle Blake. In this his wife willingly assisted; and formal visitings had been interchanged before the rebellion exploded and Donovan joined the royalists in Castlebar.

There, undoubtedly, he had used sinister means to injure my father with the commanding officers; but Cæsar Blake's unexpected adherence to the royal cause rendered any attempt to impeach his loyalty absurd. Donovan returned home a foiled and disappointed intriguer. With my father he could not compete openly; and, with deep dissimulation, but unalterable hatred, he smothered his mortification as he best could, and determined to bring about a reconciliation, until time and accident would secure a safe but tedious revenge. Manus Blake, open and unsuspicious to a fault, was easily gained over; he believed that all were sincere as himself, and freely offered his assistance to reconcile those who in love and ambition had been rivals, and mediate between an artful scoundrel and an ingenuous and confiding brother.

The approaching solemnity afforded a good opportunity to heal the feud and re-establish friendly feelings. Donovan and his wife were accordingly invited to be present. By both the invitation was joyfully accepted. Different feelings influenced them;—with Harriette, reviving love, with her husband, undying hatred.

Already this ill-assorted couple had discovered that happiness attends no union heartless and hurried as their own. Donovan's vanity was flattered by the beauty of his wife—but beyond that, he had no tenderer feeling. With Harriette, a deep aversion, almost too powerful for concealment, succeeded the hour of madness which tempted her to give a hand to one whose character she despised, and whose person she detested. For a time, a gay equipage and showy ornaments amused her, while visiting and change of scene diverted an uneasy mind from thinking; but these had ceased to interest: *ennui* came on, reflection maddened, and her passion for Cæsar Blake, indelicate, criminal, and unholy, returned with additional violence, as if the obligations that bound them both increased it; when even to think was unpardonable, and hope was at an end.

It was twilight when my father entered the ivy-covered archway of his paternal domain. March had come in with a lion's violence: the trees groaned in the storm—a deserted dog was howling mournfully—an owl flitted heavily past—and a hare crossed the avenue before him. Cæsar Blake would have been freer from superstition than his countrymen, had he regarded these ominous appearances and sounds without emotion. He spurred on rapidly, and at the hall-door met his brother and his ancient enemy returning from the stables.

Donovan anticipated an interview, and was well prepared for it. With apparent openness he at once entered into explanations; and so artful was his address, that my father was cheated into a belief of his sincerity; and, to all appearance, amity was renewed, and past differences forgotten.

Harriette, "the married woman," was first in the drawing-room, although the gallant colonel had persuaded himself, that the business of the toilette would have made her the last to enter it. Their meeting, and their *tête-à-tête*, it is unnecessary to particularise. Cæsar thought his accomplished cousin had never looked so beautiful—while every smothered feeling in her breast rekindled with increasing violence. The omens that marked his journey were forgotten; he was excited, flattered, almost possessed, and circumstances, trifling in themselves, assisted. For the first time he wore a colonel's uniform; for the first time he heard his new title echoed in the gay festival. Caution, fear, and prudence were lulled to sleep; all around was gay and reckless merriment. The heir was in due form brought to the font; my father and the seductive Harriette were the sponsors; the holy rites were followed by the banquet; the wine flowed gloriously; music was heard in the hall; the dance succeeded; all was mirth and gallantry; and Ellen, the gentle, devoted, and adoring Ellen, was half-forgotten; and Harriette, all worthless as she was, usurped her place.

Reader, censure not Cæsar Blake too hastily; let the wisest struggle with the temptation that assailed him, and let Platonists prate as they please, the stoutest resolution may fail, and even a philosopher discover that human nature is but weak; and, maugre the sophistries of schoolmen, "a man's a man for a' that!"

The night wore on; the happy parents of the heir appeared removed beyond the cares and sorrows of humanity. Donovan improved his advantage, and showed himself so solicitous to eradicate every latent spark of past unkindness, that my father began to fancy he had judged him with too much severity. Yet Donovan never hated Cæsar Blake with half the intensity before, that the admiration his wife lavished on his enemy elicited now. That very evening, a disgraced servant of the Blakes, whom he had taken into his service, in tipsy loquacity apprised him of what he had never known before; and he registered in heaven an oath of deadly vengeance. A blacker heart, a more tortured spirit than his, never occupied a human habitation: yet his laugh was loud, and he appeared the happiest of the happy. But while his manner exhibited well-dissembled confidence and mental tranquillity, he watched with a tiger's patience every look and action of his doomed rival; and, before the gay throng separated, he had seen enough to confirm his worst suspicions—his wife loved Cæsar Blake!

CHAPTER XIII.

GUILT AND MURDER.

"Oh! too convincing—dangerously dear,
In woman's eye the unanswerable tear!
That weapon of her weakness she can wield,
To save, subdue—at once her spear and shield,
Avoid it—Virtue ebbs and Wisdom errs,
Too fondly gazing on that grief of hers!
What lost a world, and bade a hero fly?
The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye.
Yet be the soft triumvir's fault forgiven:
By this, how many lose not earth, but heaven!
Consign their souls to man's eternal foe,
And seal their own, to spare some wanton's woe"
* * * * * *

Corsair.

"Whose bullet through the night air sang,
Too nearly, deadly aimed to err?"

Bride of Abydos.

THREE days passed, and hospitable rejoicings continued with unabated spirit, in honour of the long-denied blessing of an heir, which had now been vouchsafed to the lord of Castle Blake. Many of the guests remained: while those who were obliged to leave, were succeeded by a fresh supply of visitors. My father had fixed the third morning for his departure; but a stag was to be enlarged, from whom a fine run was expected, and the colonel yielded to the earnest solicitation of his brother, and consented to extend his visit to another day.

On what trifles do the gravest occurrences of life depend! My father had promised faithfully that on this day he would be at Castlebar, and he had resolved to redeem the promise. Accordingly he combated the entreaties of his host, mounted his horse, and actually commenced his journey: but, unluckily, he cast a shoe, and stopped at a smith's shop to have it replaced. During this delay, the cart with the deer came up, attended by a numerous field. Again he was pressed to join the hunters; the prospect of a gallant run and the *badinage* of the company overturned his resolutions, and he consented.

There was also another departure from Castle Blake, and that was Mr. Donovan's. Business of moment called him to Galway. The distance was long, the roads heavy, and he left with a declaration that he should not be home till next morning.

Cæsar Blake, when he changed his intention of returning, despatched his servant to apprise his lady. Ellen was anxiously expecting him; she had dressed with unusual care; and her baby's cot, gaily decorated with ever-blowing roses, was placed upon a sofa in the drawing-room. The day to her seemed interminably long, she gazed upon the slumbering child, she looked at the progress of the timepiece; she went to the window, the shades of evening were falling fast; and, as yet, her lord appeared not. Something had made her melancholy: she was still weak and nervous, it might be her husband's absence, it might be her father's marriage; and her eyes filled as they turned upon the darling pledge of pure and hallowed love. Ah! who can imagine a mother's feelings as she looks upon the first-born of an idolised father?

"How lovely he appears! his little cheeks,
In their pure incarnation, vying with
The rose-leaves strewn beneath him.
And his lips, too,
How beautifully parted!
He smiles and sleeps! Sleep on
And smile, thou little young inheritor
Of a world——Sleep on and smile!
Thine are the hours and days when both are cheering
And innocent! Must the time
Come, thou shalt be amerced for sins unknown,
Which were not thine nor mine? But now sleep on!—
His cheeks are reddening into deeper smiles,
And shining lids are trembling o'er his long
Lashes—
Half open, from beneath them, the clear blue
Laughs out, altho' in slumber. He must dream—
Of what?—of Paradise! Ay! dream of it,
My disinherited boy! 'Tis but a dream!"

"Hark! a horse stops. It is himself, thy own loved father, boy!" and Ellen flew with open arms to meet him. Alas! it was but the messenger to extinguish hope, deferred too long already.

The lights were blazing at Castle Blake, the dressing-bell had rung its second peal, and Harriette Donovan appeared in all the pride of beauty. Never had she looked lovelier, for never had she taken more pains to render her charms irresistible. She was dressed splendidly; her magnificent black hair contrasting artfully with the string of pearls that secured it, while the sparkling necklace found its brilliancy eclipsed by

"Corruscations from a lightning eye."

Her tall and voluptuous figure moved over the carpet with that natural grace that art attains not, as she sought the distant sofa where she observed her cousin. Dinner was announced. Harriette leaned upon my father's arm; and, "like a blooming eastern bride," occupied the next place at table.

Alas! Cæsar Blake, there is one at home, weeping over an infant's cradle, whose chaste and holy tear is worth all the "wreathed smiles" that ever played round the rosy lips of the dangerous beauty "who sits beside thee!"

That morning the deer had made a gallant run; the pace was severe, and those who had ridden hard drank deep, and, dropping off one by one, sought their respective dormitories. The ladies, also, from the late revelry of the preceding night, retired early: the drawing-room was deserted, Harriette disappeared, and my father retired to his chamber.

There he found a brilliant wood-fire sparkling in the hearth. He threw his coat aside, put on his dressing-gown, and with the indolence that a hard ride induces, stretched himself luxuriously upon a sofa, in quiet, dreamy listlessness, gazing upon the ruddy blaze. He thought of Ellen, and his heart smote him. Was she awake? or was she dreaming of him? No—at that lone late hour she was kneeling before her God, imploring protection for a sleeping babe, and invoking blessings on an absent husband!

Cæsar Blake was slumbering; a smart ride, a free carouse, a brilliant wood-fire, lulled his faculties into repose, and in a state of half-unconsciousness, in fancy, he was with Ellen and his child. A lip was softly pressed to his! was it a dream? He unclosed his eyes, and Harriette Donovan, "the married woman," was leaning in voluptuous *déshabille* over the sofa!

"Harriette!" he exclaimed, "is there anything wrong? Have you not retired? why are you at this hour waking?"

"Waking! Cæsar—" she replied wildly; "how can one so wretched as I expect to sleep? I have lost you. You slighted, derided, and deserted me—and yet I love you—for I cannot subdue feelings that are unconquerable!"

"Harriette, Harriette, this is madness."

"Madness you may call it, Cæsar, but I am not mad. I loved you, and you scorned me; I hated you, cursed you, and in an hour of rage threw my hand away upon a wretch whom I despise, detest, execrate! I cannot be your wife—I will be your page—your mistress—your menial: I will follow you, live with you, die for you; but, Cæsar, only love me; for without your love life is not endurable!"

My father marked the wildness of her eye, and saw that she was fearfully agitated. The position in which he found himself was indeed alarming. "Harriette," he exclaimed, "by Heaven! you will be the ruin of both! Leave me—for your own sake—for mine—for one's who gave up home and father for me. I adjure you to leave this room—stay, and we are lost—we, and one beside who is guileless."

She paused irresolutely—her eyes flashed lightnings. Was she again despised? The thought maddened, and her heart throbbed almost to bursting. There was a long pause. "Yes—*I will leave you!* Cold, cruel, heartless as you are—I cannot curse you, Cæsar," and her wild looks softened, and she melted into tears. "May *you* never feel the misery—the madness, that *I do!*" she almost fainted: she would have spoken, but her words found no utterance, while frequent sobs betrayed the inward storm that racked her bosom. My father could not witness such distress insensibly; his softer nature was touched—his weak, but human heart, gave way; he supported her in his arms—he placed her on the sofa—he brought her water—he talked and reasoned—and two o'clock found the erring fair one in his chamber.

"Harriette, farewell!" he said, as he pressed her to his heart; "May God forgive us!"

"Amen!" a deep revengeful voice responded, and Donovan stood in the door-way. He was dressed and armed. Presenting a pistol at my unfortunate father, at but three paces' distance, he drew the trigger—the bullet took effect—and Cæsar Blake fell upon the floor mortally wounded!

A dreadful commotion ensued. Harriette, the cause of all, fled shrieking to her chamber, while the murderer rushed downstairs. His horse was waiting at the door; and long before the horror-stricken household could comprehend the meaning of the alarm, the homicide was far beyond pursuit.

Accident brought on this tragedy. Donovan, unhappily, found little delay in Galway, and less difficulty in traversing the cross roads than he anticipated when he left Castle Blake. In the evening he reached the intermediate town in which he had purposed stopping; but induced by the earliness of the hour, he determined to push forwards. His own apartment was in the same wing of the building in which that of Cæsar Blake was situated. The hour was late—all was quiet—but from one window a light appeared—and that was in the chamber of his enemy. What kept him waking? He held his breath—dark suspicions crossed his mind—he gazed with starting eyes, and he saw a female form shadowed on the wall. Her arms were round the neck, her head was resting on the bosom of his enemy! He rushed upstairs, opened his own chamber, and found it deserted.

The rest is known. His wife's infidelity was discovered; and Cæsar Blake fell a martyr to the feebleness of man's resolution, and the madness of woman's love!

CHAPTER XIV.

"Fast from his breast the blood is bubbling—

* * * * * *

He was thy hope—thy joy—thy love—thine all,
And that last thought on him thou couldst not save
Sufficed to kill;
Burst forth in one wild cry, and all was still!"

Bride of Abydos.

"Five bits of lead,
Or three, or two, or one, send very far!"

Don Juan.

THE consternation of the sleeping inmates of the castle, when awakened by the report of firearms and the loud outcries of the first domestics who entered the chamber of the dying man, is not to be described; and never was there a wilder scene of tumult and horror than the house now presented. The shrieks of women, the imprecations of men, were everywhere heard, while some were calling for assistance, and others raving for revenge. Manus Blake, who had been among the foremost to reach the apartment of his unfortunate brother, raised him from the floor, and laid him gently on the bed. The surgeon of a dragoon regiment, who happened to be of the number of the guests, having cleared the chamber of the crowd, proceeded to examine my father's wound. A hasty inspection satisfied him that the injury was mortal, and one glance told Manus Blake that his favourite brother was doomed to fill an untimely grave. Expresses were sent off in various directions, additional surgical assistance procured, and the curate of the parish despatched to break the melancholy tidings to my mother, and convey her without delay to Castle Blake, to bid an eternal farewell to him in whom her every hope of earthly happiness centred.

It would be a useless and painful detail to describe the agony of grief with which my mother received the fatal news, though gently and gradually communicated. At times, during the melancholy journey her faculties appeared to be paralysed by the excess of her misery; and for miles she remained in stupid, silent astonishment, as if feeling and perception had been overwhelmed, and extinguished altogether. Then, as if suddenly awaking to a consciousness of her wretchedness, a fit of frenzy would succeed this mute and torpid apathy, venting itself in piercing shrieks, until exhausted, she fainted in the arms of the clergyman and her female attendant.

It was during the wildest of these bursts of anguish, that a carriage was passing that which bore the hapless mourner to her husband's death-bed. The early travellers—for morning was but breaking—appeared impatient of delay, and, from the narrowness of the road, a momentary stop was necessary, to allow the vehicles to proceed without collision. The interruption was noticed by those within, and the blinds, which

had been drawn down, were for an instant raised. Great God! what must have been the feelings of her who occupied that gay equipage, as shriek succeeded shriek from the carriage that impeded hers? That frantic mourner was the woman whose happiness she had blasted—her whom she widowed—whose babe she made an orphan—for the early traveller was Harriette Donovan, hurrying from the scene of misery and blood which her unholy love had caused.

When the fatal decision of the surgeon was communicated to Cæsar Blake, he bore it with manly resignation. At his earnest request, the room was cleared of all except his brother and a clergyman, who had hastened to offer spiritual consolation to the dying soldier. What passed was never known, farther than that the wounded man consigned his wife and child to his brother's protection, and exacted a solemn promise that no vindictive proceedings should be pursued against his murderer. The interview was long and melancholy; and when the surgeons were again admitted, Manus Blake exhibited tokens of the deepest sorrow, while the minister of peace was totally unmanned. The night wore through; morning broke; momentarily Cæsar Blake became feebler; it was evident to all, that the hour of dissolution was approaching, and it became questionable whether the fading spark would hold out much longer, and enable the drooping soldier to take his last farewell of one, on whom, even amid the agonies of a painful departure, all his thoughts turned.

"Manus," said my father, in a feeble voice, "has morning dawned sufficiently to permit you to see the gate?"—"Yes, my dearest brother; compose yourself, Ellen will soon be here."

"Would that she were!" replied the dying man. "*Remember*, Manus—you know my last wish, and you will be all to my poor wife and my orphan child?"—"They shall be dear to me as a cherished sister and as an only boy!" and the iron nerves of my uncle could not control his emotions, while big tears stole down his manly cheek.

"Enough!" said my father, "I die contented. Oh, Ellen! could I but breathe my last sigh upon thy bosom—couldst thou but listen to my dying words, invoking blessings on thee and thy poor boy!"—"Compose yourself, dearest Cæsar, Ellen will be here immediately;" and a slight confusion in the chamber announced the expected arrival. The mourner's carriage had entered the grand entrance, and was seen at a rapid pace proceeding down the avenue.

It was well for the poor sufferer that she was insensible to everything around, or the present fearful visit would have formed a dreadful contrast to that joyous evening on which she first entered the portal of Castle Blake. The stopping of the carriage partially recalled her memory, and she wildly inquired "where she was?" But when the lofty figure of Manus Blake presented itself, his features marked with intense grief, every fear was realised—the full consciousness of misery returned—she uttered a piercing and sustained shriek of anguish, that reached the chamber of the dying man, and told that she was now painfully alive to the extent of her wretchedness.

Willingly would I pass over the scene that followed. They carried her upstairs—they placed her beside her departing husband—her lips were laid to his, and a wild despairing glance fixed upon that fading eye which never had turned upon her with any but a look of love. "Ellen!" said a voice so feeble as to be heard with difficulty. "I am going—fast—God bless——"

The surgeon held the wrist of the arm which was extended over the bed-coverings, and made a mute sign that my mother should be removed—Cæsar Blake's last sigh had departed!

"It is over!" said the churchman, raising his glistening eyes. "Into thy hands, Father, we commend him!"

"What!" screamed the wild voice of the mourner—"Who says he's dead? It's false!" Nor indeed did the departed soldier bear the semblance of an extinguished spirit.

> "He seem'd to sleep, for you could scarcely tell
> (As he bled inwardly, no hideous river
> Of gore divulged the cause) that he was dead."

"Speak to me!" she continued—"Speak to Ellen, my own darling and adored husband! Ha! he does not hear me!" she laid her lips to his; "I feel no breath;—Cæsar, speak! He *is dead!*" and in violent convulsions she sank upon the senseless body.

I must hurry the detail. All that human skill could do was done. While strength remained, shrieks and groans, that would have harrowed a marble breast to listen to, were heard from my mother's chamber; convulsions succeeded each other quickly, and during one of the most severe, a vessel in the head ruptured. Ellen's sufferings were mercifully ended; and before the remains of Cæsar Blake were cold, his wife lay at his side a corpse, and *I* was made an orphan!

* * * *

This frightful tragedy occasioned a powerful sensation—the sympathies of all classes were excited—all execrated the deed, all denounced the murderer; and, as a last token of respect, while the bodies were being waked, the castle was thronged by crowds of sincere mourners. On the day of the funeral, every road and height was covered with countless multitudes, and twenty thousand persons witnessed the melancholy ceremony.

When the coffins were extended side by side in the church-aisle, and the beautiful service for the dead was being performed, the simple inscriptions on the plates pointed a striking lesson of the insecurity of mortal life and human happiness. "Lieutenant-Colonel Cæsar Blake, aged 28 years!"—And was that heap of clay the proud, and chivalrous, and gallant soldier? Short was his career! The scroll upon the lesser lid was as laconic—"Dame Ellinor Blake, aged 19." Great God! brief was the space vouchsafed to one so fair and young and innocent!

The bodies were consigned to the tomb—"dust to dust" was spoken—and the earth rattled hollowly above the dead soldier and his wife! Amid tears and lamentations the grave was filled—the crowd were beginning to disperse—and the last sod was smoothed over "the narrow house." There was a momentary silence, while all looked with full hearts and fuller eyes on the little mound that covered "the brave and beautiful."

Just then a youthful stranger issued from the crowd, and gazed for an instant on the double grave. He knelt and kissed the turf, plucked a few blades from the herbage, and in a voice clear

and distinct enough to be overheard by hundreds, exclaimed, "Cæsar Blake! before this turf of grass is withered, your murderer shall fill as red a grave as this!" Turning from the spot, he disappeared among the dense multitude.

"Who is he?" asked many voices. None answered—for none knew.

* * * *
* * * *

A month passed; the assizes were at hand; and Mr. Donovan, who had absconded, on learning what the dying request of his victim had been, determined to come in and risk a trial. Had a rigorous prosecution been anticipated, he would not have hazarded this step; but, well assured that vindictive measures were not meditated by the relatives of the deceased, he was aware that by a proper application of money, all contingent chances of a conviction would be evaded. He subsidised accordingly the sub-sheriff—a jury was prepared—and the prisoner was arraigned, tried, and acquitted.

And yet Donovan's escape was very critical. The injunctions of a dying brother to Manus Blake were sacred, and therefore he took no steps to ensure a conviction of the murderer; while the prisoner secured a powerful bar, a venal sheriff, and a packed jury—and the latter saved him.

The evidence was heard; the judge summed up, and charged unfavourably for the traverser. *Ten* of the jury were unanimous to find him guilty —*two* were for an acquittal; and these were professional *boot-eaters*.*

"There's nothing like leather," says an old moral; and in Peter Donovan's case it was a proven truism. The jury for two long days and nights remained secluded. The ten for a conviction were "good men and true," but the *leather-cutters* were far more efficient—for they had entered the box regularly provisioned for the nonce, a precaution which their brethren had unhappily neglected. Jurymen cannot live on air, and the conclusion may be guessed; the *two* held out—the *ten* gave in—and Donovan was acquitted.

Consummate as that scoundrel's audacity was, he felt himself too happy in stealing from the assize-town unobserved. Swagger and impudence were unavailing now: the timid turned from him with aversion, and the bolder took no trouble to conceal their abhorrence. This was sufficiently annoying; but the truculent looks and muttered curses of the peasantry alarmed him far more. He perceived that his life was insecure; and he determined to leave the country for a time, until the storm blew over, and popular indignation should subside. Leaving the town at midnight, he reached his miserable home without any interruption: and, among low followers and broken sycophants, vainly strove to forget that blood was upon his hands.

Still, even here he heard enough to make him anxious to expedite his departure: his tenantry were driven from the fairs; his servants insulted in the market-town; every post brought him threatening letters; and his own domain—and he never left it—was now deemed insecure. His arrangements were completed, and the next day he was to leave the neighbourhood, and seek safety in another land.

He sat at his own table; a low attorney, a dependent kinsman, the blackguards who had acquitted him, and two or three broken-down spendthrifts, formed fitting guests for a murderer's board.

In imitation of ancient houses, Donovan had retained a harper. To one naturally unmusical, having no ancestral recollections to wed him to half-forgotten usages, the presence of the bard was tolerated from vanity alone. To-night, the tunes he played were unhappily selected, and the names and melodies unsuited to the temper of the master of the house; and the old man was rudely dismissed from a board where music had no charms, and wine alone could produce a simulated mirth, which, when the lip smiles, cannot prevent the breast from sighing.

A heartless effort at hilarity vanishes at the most trifling annoyance. Donovan had lost a favourite dog, and a considerable reward was offered, but in vain, for his recovery. That evening the head of the poor animal was affixed to his gate, and a scroll attached to it, declaring that a similar fate awaited the owner before another week would pass. No wonder the parting revelry was clouded by gloomy forebodings, and that the smile was forced, and the jest a mockery. The hour of separation was near; all had drunk deeply; for, to drown remorse, Donovan himself had latterly resorted to the bottle.

"We must cancel that will, Hawkins," he said; "like every other new-married fool, I was bewitched; and to cut off my next relation, whom I hate, left every acre to that infernal woman." The attorney assented. "Poison every inch of the mearings; and if Blake's hounds attempt to draw a cover within miles, he may send a cart for their carcasses." The dependent nodded obedience. "And now for bed, boys, for I must be astir by cockcrow."

"Not until we have one glorious round!" exclaimed a ruined blackleg. "Fill, every man of ye. This is our host: long life to him: give him a full bumper!"

The party were seated in a back room that looked into an enclosed garden. From its greater security, this apartment had been of late the favourite chamber of Donovan. The shutters were but partially closed; and the young moon glancing in, was sometimes seen and sometimes hidden; for the night was boisterous and cloudy. The glasses were filled to the brim—the company rose to drink the toast with fitting honours, and the name of Donovan was on every lip. Suddenly the attorney pointed to the casement.

"What's that?" asked the host, with all the quickness of intuitive suspicion.—"It was only fancy," returned the man of law; "I thought I saw a human countenance peeping through the window there. It must have been the shadow of Miles Dogherty."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Donovan as he looked round. "That stupid scoundrel of a servant always neglects to close the shutters: not that we need fear intruders here, for the garden-wall is twenty feet high."—"Phoo!" said the boot-eater, "the devil himself could not get over that."

"We may as well, however, close the win-

* In the kingdom of Connaught, a boot-eater meaneth a gentleman who enters a jury-box with his verdict ready for delivery; nor will he, from evidence or any other cause, alter the same, even though obliged "to eat his own boots."

dows," said Donovan ; and, stepping forward, he laid his hand upon the shutter. He started instantly. "By heaven!" he exclaimed, "there is a man outside! Who's there?"

"*The avenger of Cæsar Blake!*" returned a voice that harrowed all that heard it. The words were scarcely uttered, when a close explosion shook the room ; splintered glass flew across the table ; and Donovan made one backward step, and fell heavily on the carpet. In rushed the servants—they raised their master—he was a dead man—for several bullets had ruptured the heart and divided the spine. Uproar and confusion ensued. After some delay, the garden was searched, for none of the guests wished to beard the murderer ; but none was found ; and the avenger of Cæsar Blake remained undiscovered.

CHAPTER XV.

MY BOYHOOD.—MRS. BLAKE CASEY.

"*Miss Hoyden.*—His honour desires you'll be so kind as to let us be married to-morrow.

Young Fashion.—To-morrow! No, no; 'tis now, this very hour, I would have the ceremony performed.

Miss Hoyden.—'Ecod! with all my heart."

Trip to Scarborough.

"Oh ye! who teach the ingenuous youth of nations,
Holland, France, England, Germany, or Spain,
I pray ye flog them upon all occasions,
It mends their morals : never mind the pain."

Don Juan.

I WAS removed to Castle Blake, and placed in my aunt's nursery. Never was orphan more tenderly attended to, and never a dying pledge more faithfully redeemed, than that made by Manus Blake to my deceased parent. Attached as my uncle was to his long-expected heir, I seemed to be equally regarded. We were brought up like twin-brothers, and our names were not more similar than our persons.

And yet my blundering relative injured me from the very cradle. He not only neglected to communicate my mother's death to Mr. Harrison ; but when a letter was received from that singular personage, stating that he had seen the melancholy affair reported in the papers, and offering his protection to me, Manus, irritated at some passage in the epistle that he imagined reflected on his brother's character, transmitted in reply a thundering philippic, so ingenuously worded as to sting my grandfather to the quick, and smother every reviving spark of natural affection.

The records of infancy are not very interesting, nor are they of much importance to society at large, save in poetical biographies, when it is desirable to ascertain, if possible, by a stop-watch, the precise period when the first "lisp in numbers" can be authenticated. The history of a boyhood is not more valuable, excepting when the chronicled one slips off antecedent to the seventh year, a paragon of precocious piety, and leaving "sayings and doings" sufficient for a saintly annual or methodist magazine. Indeed, boys in good health are in propensities and pursuits pretty similar ; and in the kingdom of Connaught the course of education generally adopted is nearly the same. There they whip tops, and are whipped in turn ; break windows and worry cats ; learn to ride and read ; are taught card-playing and their catechism ; and so gradually improve, until in due time they shoot flying and kiss the nursemaids. Now my cousin and myself were no exceptions to "ingenuous youth," only that Jack possessed more animal spirits, with a finer development of the organ of destructiveness. Father Roger Dowling, who confessed my aunt and superintended our education, could occasionally manage to keep me for an hour to my "humanities ;" while Jack, unless strapped to the table, would not remain steady for a second ; and for every window that I broke, he smashed twenty. Indeed Father Roger declared, "that were I removed from the evil influence and example of my kinsman, I was the making of as nate a scholar as ever thumbed a dictionary ; but Jack, might the Lord mend him!—he, Roger, had taught two generations, and finished in less than no time sundry gentlemen whom he enumerated, and who, when they came under his tutelage, hardly knew a B from a bull's foot : but Jack bate Bannagher, and would vex a saint even were he loaded with psalm-books.

We passed our thirteenth year, and still were at the feet of Father Roger. I wrote tolerably, and read Virgil. Jack was an execrable scribe, and knew as much of the Mantuan bard as he did of the author of Junius ; but he was not deficient in other accomplishments. He shot well, rode dashingly, tied flies, cropped terriers, and, as Tony Joyce, the huntsman, averred, was a most promising youth, provided they did not "smother him with larning."—"If he was intended for a priest, it was right enough ; but for a gentleman, and he too the head of the Blakes, what had he to do with books and balderdash? He, Tony, wished he might only fill his grandfather's shoes, for he indeed was an honour to the name ; and sure all the world knew that Ulick Blake was but a marksman." Father Roger, however, was not so sanguine touching his pupil's future career.—"He trusted he might be astray, and that Jack would come to a dacent end ; but he, Roger, could not forget Kit Costello, who was hanged at Ennis, for shooting the sub-sheriff—and Jack Blake was as like Kit Castello in every turn, as one pea was to another."

Whether it was that the eternal jeremiads of the confessor began to alarm Manus and his lady, certain it is that a public school was decided upon as a proper place to give to Jack and me "the last polish." "It was hard too," they admitted, "to part with such promising boys. They had no harm in their hearts, and young blood was warm." This consideration might have saved us from a probation of light food and heavy flogging at the academy of Loughrea ; but while our fate was in the balance, an unforeseen accident occurred, that consigned us to Doctor Bircham.

It so happened that Manus Blake had a female relative, who bore the plebeian name of Casey. To do the good lady common justice, she did all she could to render it palatable to "ears polite," by affixing her maiden appellation ; and hence, her letters were addressed and her cards engraven, "Mrs. Blake Casey." Now the defunct Casey in name and calling was equally unaristocratic, for he had been a tailor. In one of his periodical incursions into the kingdom of Connaught, on the forlorn hope of collecting "moneys due," Providence—for marriages it is allowed are made

in heaven—ordained that he should travel *tête-à-tête* in the Roscrea stage with Miss Honoria Blake. She was a stout gentlewoman, and rather past maturity; and, as it turned out, never did two persons embark in the same vehicle on more unchristian terms with mankind, than Honoria Blake and Jeremiah Casey, aforesaid.

The lady was returning from a Blazer ball; and though, at first sight, she might have appeared rather corpulent for a "coryphee," nevertheless she delighted in country-dancing, and there was not a catch-weight in Galway more enduring, take her either at reel or jig. Imagine then her indignation, when, on the preceding night, she had been permitted to overlook a whist-table! Those on whom she had a legitimate claim were too drunk to stand; and those who were not, were left to sit unheeded. None claimed "her soft hand;" and her figured muslin, its first appearance upon any stage, was never allowed to rustle down the middle!

Nor was Jeremiah Casey in happier mood. Every year his customers became more dilatory; and it appeared to him, that in Connaught, by a general consent, payments were to be procrastinated to the day of judgment.

Jerry had scoured the country from cockcrow to curfew. Of his numerous correspondents, sundry were sick, and divers invisible; one man was absent at a fox-hunt, another had bolted with his neighbour's wife, and those who favoured him with an interview were not more satisfactory. One, whom he had furnished with a bridal outfit, threatened him with instant death for recalling the event, and thereby wounding his feelings, as his lady had left him in a fortnight. Another generously offered to accept at six months for two hundred, provided Jerry handed over the balance, being eighty-four pounds six shillings and fourpence, upon the spot. Mr. Bodkin had been cleaned out at the Curragh, and Mr. M'Dermott requested he would oblige him by discounting a bill. Mr. Kirwan was anxious to know on what night the Westport mail was robbed, as that event must have occurred, and himself suspected to have been present and *particeps criminis*, or he, Jerry, never would have the assurance to demand money from him at that time of the year. Mr. Burke felt offended at the indelicacy of the application, as, but five years before, he had actually paid him, Jerry, fifty pounds: and Mr. Donnelan trusted the tenants would not hear he was a tailor, and from Dublin; he, Donnelan, wished him well, and feared, if discovered, that he could not save his life. In one house, he found the lower windows built up, as the occupant had quarrelled with the coroner. At another, even before he could announce his name, he was covered with a blunderbuss from the attic, and obliged to abscond with as much rapidity as if he had committed a felony. In short, Jeremiah Casey was returning a sadder and not a richer man, than when he crossed the Shannon; and had half determined, like Mr. Daniel O'Connell, to "register a vow in heaven," never during the remainder of his natural life to apply shears to broadcloth, for any customer westward of the bridge of Athlone.

Woman is an uncertain article; and so says every man who hath passed five-and-twenty. Some of them are won in smiles, and others are best wooed when sulky. I know not what tempted Jerry Casey, when driven desperate by bad debts, to then begin thinking about matrimony; nor why Honoria Blake, when at war with all the sex, should condescend to vow submission to a fraction of humanity. But Jerry was rich as a Jew; Honoria living on sufferance with her clan, even unto the third and fourth generation. The result was, that after a courtship "short, sharp, and decisive," Honoria Blake was united to Jeremiah Casey; and so said all the newspapers.

There was dire commotion among *the tribes*, when it was announced that one of "the ould stock" had committed matrimony with a tailor. But this indignation was "deep, not loud." In the alphabet of Jerry's ledger, the names of the complainants were awfully recorded. Though he, good easy man, might be trifled with, his lady, if roused, would probably exhibit different feelings. Quickly and quietly the indignity was forgotten; one by one, the kindred of Mrs. Casey condescended to drop in at dinner-time; Usher's Quay was convenient to the Four Courts; Jerry was "a dacent poor devil after all;" his port was sound—his *pot-luck* not amiss; and before the honeymoon had waned her horns, Blakes, Burkes, and Bodkins united legs under Mrs. Casey's mahogany.

So matters sped. Five years passed; and Jerry was called to his account, and slept with his fathers—if he had any such. He surfeited himself, poor man!—for he was a true Catholic—with eggs and bacon, after a black Lent, on an Easter Sunday: and Mrs. Casey found herself a disconsolate widow, having forty thousand pounds in government stock, divers houses in the city, an annuity of five hundred pounds, and Connaught securities sufficient to fill a travelling trunk.

Without loss of time, the relict of the departed tailor cut the Quay, engaged a newly-furnished house, exchanged Jerry's "one-horse chay" for a chariot, built to order by Hutton; and a brass-plate, large enough for a dentist, appeared on the door of No. 21, Merrion Square, bearing the name of "Mrs. BLAKE CASEY," and underneath, in smaller letters, "*knock and ring.*"

Then it was, that by every post letters of condolence came pouring in. Natural affection, of course, excited the sympathies of Mrs. Casey's numerous connections; but it was hinted that other causes assisted. Jerry's books had been handed over to Messrs. Sharp and Sweepall; and they had circularised Connaught, hoping, with equal politeness and sincerity, that all debts due to the late Jeremiah Casey, *Esquire*, would be directly discharged; and they, Sharp and Sweepall, saved the very disagreeable duty of enforcing immediate payment of the same.

My uncle Manus was nearest blood-relation to the afflicted widow. He had survived all his brothers. The captain was killed at Trafalgar, in command of a Spanish seventy-four; and the brigadier was assassinated in the streets of Dresden, about a love affair which his blundering management had *eclated*. Consequently Manus was the nearest and natural heir to Honor Casey. He and the lady were therefore, in due time, formally reconciled; and, in proof of renewed amity, she accepted an invitation to Castle Blake; and set off for said place, in great distress of mind, and a new carriage.

Great were the preparations to give an honourable reception to Mrs. Blake Casey; and expectation was on tiptoe to see how the wealthy widow bore her good luck. Five o'clock struck, and a yellow chariot with four post-horses rolled under the grand gateway, and Jack and I ensconced ourselves in a convenient window, to command a good view of the important visitor.

On the box, a priggish-looking footman, in deep mourning and worsted épaulettes, sat beside the lady's maid. From a hasty inspection of his legs, Jack decided that he had been a favourite disciple of the departed tailor. On his knee he carried a large cage, in which a green parrot was deposited; and a worse disposed bird never crossed the line. Within, the widow sate in state, with an asthmatic poodle her companion. Trunks, boxes, and imperials were in and about the vehicle in such abundance, that had Jerry not been in purgatory, or heaven *—for, as he levanted at the end of a strict Lent, his probation for short measures and long charges might have been abridged—one might believe, that therein was contained a fresh outfit for every customer in the county.

We described Honoria Blake to be a stout gentlewoman, and I was prepared to see a portly personage debark; but when she essayed it, a mountain of flesh endeavoured to extricate itself, as by a flank movement, she attempted to clear the carriage-door. Mrs. Casey had indeed become a monster; and as she clomb the steps with Manus Blake's assistance, her figure was so absurd, that my friend Jack sat down upon the carpet, to laugh with more convenience to himself.

It will be hardly necessary to observe that Mrs. Casey and her suite were fully as troublesome as could be expected. Before they had passed a week in Castle Blake, they hated all therein, and received an honest return. Father Roger hoped there was no sin in wishing Mrs. C. safe in heaven; while the prayers of Denis O'Brien—who since my father's death had become chief butler to my uncle—would have sent her in an opposite direction. Nor was the lady's establishment more fortunate in gaining the regard of the household. The maid was a verjuiced spinster, too old to love herself, and too ill-natured to look on. The footman was a regular snip; and from the configuration of his limbs, had obtained from the servants the surname of *Giblets;* the poodle was a nuisance, and the parrot had nearly bitten off my aunt's finger.

Between Jack and the entire set, a secret but deadly war was raging. He persecuted the spinster; put Giblets on a vicious horse, by which his bones were bruised, and his life endangered; trod, on all safe occasions, upon the poodle's tail, and kept the parrot in such eternal irritation, that Mother Casey herself dared not take a liberty with the offended bird. It is not marvellous, all things considered, that the visit should come to an untimely close; and so it did.

We have already described the great difficulty that Mrs. Casey experienced in depositing her person in a carriage, and also in extricating it from the same. Now, my aunt had a low four-wheeled chair, in which she occasionally drove over the demesne; and, as it afforded facilities to Mrs. Casey, which her own vehicle possessed not, she more than once had used it for an airing. One fine morning she determined on a drive, and Jack was despatched to order my aunt's chair. On his return, he overheard Manus Blake and Mrs. Casey holding a cabinet council, very imprudently, with open doors. Jack listened; his own name was pronounced, and there was little in the manner which could increase his personal vanity. Mrs. Casey premised "that what she said was from family affection, although it distressed her to do so; but she could not conceal the truth; the boys were on the road to ruin, and nothing could save them but a strict public school;" and she concluded by earnestly recommending Doctor Bircham's.

Now, Jack had a horror of schools in general; and Bircham flogged with the left hand, and was reputed the hardest hitter that ever operated on a delinquent. Indeed, his establishment was a sort of purgatory for juvenile offenders; and the name of Bircham carried terror to the most desperate. Judge, then, Jack's consternation, when his father willingly consented and named an early day for our departure.

Jack, I regret to say, never evinced that meek and christian disposition which delighteth in repaying evil with good. He vowed vengeance against Mother Casey, and all appertaining to her; and to use parliamentary language, he lost no time in redeeming his pledge.

The wheels of my aunt's chair grated on the gravel, and Mrs. Casey, as the day was fine, notified her intention of taking all her favourites along with her; cloaks, shawls, and umbrellas were put in, and so were the maid, the poodle, and the parrot. The stout gentlewoman ascended next, Manus Blake aiding and assisting; Giblets perched himself on the hind carriage, and off this precious party trundled.

But short was their excursion. Before the vehicle proceeded fifty yards, off came a hind-wheel and out came the company! A desperate outcry apprised Manus Blake of the accident: he looked, and their saw Giblets over his honoured mistress, and the poodle under her: the parrot had secured the maid's finger; and cloaks, cushions, and cage formed a general wreck.

Promptly they were succoured: Mother Casey was carried to the house, and brought about by the usual restoratives, brandy and burnt feathers. The favourites had suffered severely: the poodle was lame—the maid's finger less by the nail—Giblets frightened to death—and the parrot bereaved of tail and topping. Well was it for all that the fatal cause of this capsize remained unknown: Jack had privately purloined the linch-pin, and no wonder that the wheel followed it.

Yet dark suspicions haunted Mrs. Casey. The luckless vehicle belonged to Manus Blake, and Manus Blake was her next heir. The maid whispered doubtingly, and Giblets dropped mysterious hints. Deeper and deeper grew suspicion; and on the third day, and with brief ceremony, Mrs. Blake Casey moved off, "bag and baggage."

But, alas! the mischief was done, the decrees

* In the kingdom of Connaught, it is universally believed that tailors and musicians after death are cantoned in a place called "Fiddler's Green." As it is not marked on any map of Arrowsmith, I cannot describe its precise situation further, than that report places it unpleasantly contiguous to Pandemonium.

had gone forth ; and Jack and I were consigned to Dr. Bircham. We departed for Loughrea with heavy hearts—and Heaven knows ! we had good reason. Fame had only done the doctor justice ; for never since the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew were poor devils flayed as we were.

Three years passed ; the breach between Manus and his kinswoman was widened by the ingenuity of Giblets and the maid, until all communication ceased by mutual consent between the lord of Castle Blake and the relict of Jeremiah Casey, Esquire. Jack and I continued under the tutorage of Dr. Bircham ; and, indeed, that left-handed professor sustained his well-earned reputation on our proper persons.

At last the joyful hour arrived that emancipated us from his thrall. Jack being destined for the woolsack, was despatched to the Dublin University ; and how he got entrance remains a mystery. I, like my poor father, was deemed fit food for gunpowder, and gazetted to an ensigncy ; and with a good horse, a gentlemanly kit, fifty guineas in my pocket, and as light a heart as ever bounded at "tuck of drum," I set out for the good town of Drogheda, to learn the art of war, and carry the regimental colours of the —— militia.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE —— MILITIA.—COUNTRY QUARTERS.—MY RECEPTION THERE.

"Hark ye, Gil Blas," said he to me one day, "thou art no longer a child, and it is high time for a brisk lad of sixteen, like thee, to push thy fortune in the world."
LE SAGE.

READER, do you recollect the Irish militia? Have you ever had the good-luck to meet a regiment of the right sort, and dance at their ball, or be waked upon their mess-table? I don't mean one of your city legions—a congregation of runaway apprentices, officered by reduced tradesmen, commanded by a chief corporator, with enough of discipline to escort a deserter, and sufficient spirit to steal linen from a hedge. Nor do I mean a northern battalion, where all were drawn men,* who, poor souls ! had they been permitted but a choice, would have never left the loom for the musket ; whose officers were moral and married, and their regimental establishment of womankind on the scale of the 4th Veterans, in which every private was allowed a wife, and the adjutant had two. None of these do I mean ; but one of the celebrated corps embodied in counties touching on that blessed stream, the Shannon ; commanded by *raal* gentlemen ; all, from the colonel to the colour-bearer, keeping hack or hunter ; carrying off diurnally his half-cooper of port ; fighting his man as soon as he could find a decent quarrel ; and eschewing matrimony as piously as the parish priest himself.

To such a distinguished corps it was my good-fortune to be attached. My letters of introduction procured me immediate attention from the field-officers ; and with the rest I was as intimate in two days, as if I had been born in the regiment. I learned the manual and platoon ; got on from a pint of port until I could walk steadily under a bottle ; and in three months was so perfect in drill, that I was deemed competent to take the duties of a worn-out lieutenant, who had been allowed to go home on a sick-leave.

The detachment to which I was ordered off, was quartered in a small town adjoining the mountains, and stationed there to protect half a dozen gaugers, who were waging war against illicit whisky. It consisted of two companies : one was commanded by Captain O'Moore, and he was mad ; the other by Captain Daly, and he was married. Of the subalterns, two were sick and absent, and the other twain sent from head-quarters, being, as the colonel considered, unsuited for the corps. One drank water, kept Lent, played the fiddle, and professed anti-duelling principles : the other, because the commander disliked him for some cause with which we were unacquainted ; he was, they said, reserved and unsocial, and, from his brusque manners and cynical disposition, generally unpopular.

I had despatched my servant with my traps on the preceding day ; and, when I reached my new quarters at dusk, found my apartments ready for my reception. As the town was not a regular military station, the men were billeted out, and the officers occupied a temporary barrack. This was a ruinous house, belonging to a gentleman who had once possessed extensive properties in the neighbourhood, but had contrived to let the "dirty acres" slip through his fingers, and not even retain "the family pictures." The division of the mansion kept the numerous inmates tolerably apart, although under the same roof. The madman seized on the lower portion of the premises ; the married man cantoned himself in the right wing of the first floor ; the centre chamber was occupied by his daughter ; and in the left extremity my household goods were deposited. In the upper apartments, the cynic had established himself above the captain ; the fiddler over me ; and thus was I placed between two nuisances—a noisy lunatic, and the most execrable musician that ever tormented catgut with horse-hair.

While Phil Bradley, my attendant, took my horse, he informed me that Captain Daly had left his card on my table, with a polite invitation to dinner. This was a customary civility to a new-comer, and, of course, I accepted it. Mounting to my domicile, I made a hasty toilet, and had just concluded, when a tap at the door announced a visitor, and the gallant captain presented himself in form.

* Soldiers chosen by ballot, in war time, and obliged to find a substitute, or serve in person.

Had Captain Daly flourished fifty years before, I would have given my corporal oath that he was the archetype of Smollett's Weazle. Never, indeed, were two commanders so much alike; and, for the life of me, I could scarcely preserve my gravity. The captain bowed, delivered a complimentary speech, to which I returned a suitable reply: he hoped I was not tired—long ride—heavy roads—dinner ready; and next moment I found myself in the chamber of state, and in due form was presented to Mrs. and Miss Daly.

The commander's helpmate formed as striking a contrast to her amiable husband in physical solidity, as substance does to shadow. She was at the middle age, a stout and florid personage, who when young had been undoubtedly handsome. Her corpulency had not rendered her inactive; and a very superficial acquaintance was enough to prove, that in domestic management she was the stouter vessel.

The young lady inherited her mother's comeliness, while to her papa there seemed no more striking affinity than the generic characteristics which zoologists ascribe as common to the whole family of man. She was some twenty, "ay, by the mass! or nearer" twenty-one; and her dark eyes, pretty teeth, and *espiègle* air, assorted well with a round and Hebe-looking figure, which a few years would probably increase to stoutness, if not obesity.

Such was the party to whom I was introduced, and who were to be my next-door neighbours during my sojourn in country quarters. My appetite, after a twenty-mile ride, was unexceptionable, and I yearned for the moment when dinner should appear; nor was I long in expectancy.

"Lucinda, my dare," said the captain's lady, "just pop ye'r head over the banister, and tell Judy to dish. Misther Bleak, ye'll excuse us this turn, it's only pot-luck ye'll get; but thus we soldiers live;" and she laughed uproariously. Meanwhile the commander extracted a cork at the sideboard, that exploded like a pocket-pistol; the butler, to a Boyne salmon placed *vis-à-vis* a stubble-goose, from which a perfume, not exactly that of "Araby the blest," exhaled; there being a seasoned pudding in the interior of the bird, the handywork of Mrs. Daly herself.

Nothing could go off better than the entertainment. I ate like a traveller, but Captain D. beat me hollow, although, as his lady whispered, "he put it into a bad skin." Good eating produced good drinking; the bottle of sherry vanished with the cheese, and the commander politely inquired, whether I would be for "screw or kettle." I chose the latter; and Mrs. Daly, from a private store, brought forward a square flask of excellent capacity, which contained, as she averred, a liquor at the same time potent and pleasant, for "a man might take his stoup, and rise for early parade next morning fresh as a daisy."

If Mrs. Daly was great in culinary compositions, her skill was not inferior in fabricating what she termed a "stiff tumbler." Of course, she was placed over the kettle-department for the evening, and we were as happy as Irish kings. Miss Lucinda had been for two years an inmate of Mrs. Dowdall's seminary in Athenry, and there had learned the science of sweet sounds; and at her papa's request, sate down to favour me with a specimen of her powers, vocal and instrumental. The music-book was open, the symphony of that sentimental air "The wealth of the cottage" had commenced, when, prompt as an echo, a melancholy and irregular scraping answered it, announcing that the artist overhead was preparing an accompaniment.

"Blessed mother!" ejaculated Mrs. Daly, "it's that devil Kenrick! Sure, I thought the rheumatism in his shoulder would have kept him quiet for a week or two. Captain, my dare, send Tony up; tell him to say the sergeant-major's child's a dyin', or Mrs. Murphy's in the straw, or anything that'll stop him, wid my blessing into the bargain."

But before Tony could execute his mission, a new alarm arose without, and the lower door of the building was dashed in, as if a nine-pound shot had struck it. A yell and volley of oaths that rung through the barrack succeeded; the symphony stopped; the fiddle was heard no more: Captain Daly turned pale; Miss Lucinda crossed herself; while the hostess exclaimed, with a fervour that bespoke the sincerity of her imprecation, "May the curse of Cromwell attend ye night and day, Philip O'Moore!"

For some time the noise below was astounding. Tables were overturned, and chairs pelted about the room like oranges; and a tin horn, the barking of a terrier, the captain's yells, and the servants' roars of "murder," pealed through the building. While the tumult was at its height, a soldier rushed in, and begged a candle for the love of Jasus! as his master was in the dark, and "making smithereens of everything." But before the valet could be accommodated, Captain O'Moore added himself to our party.

His first appearance alarmed me, and no wonder. He was a tall, powerful, and athletic man, with amazingly broad shoulders, and legs that would surprise a coal-heaver. His dress was unique. He wore an old weather-beaten hunting-cap, to which it was his pleasure to affix a fox's brush. His frock had been once scarlet, but, from age and hard usage, the primitive hue was doubtful. A calf-skin vest overlapped leather inexpressibles. One leg was encased in a jockey-boot, while the other was contented with a hessian. In his right hand he carried a heavy brass-handled thong-whip, under his left arm a brown valise, and a rough, wire-haired bull-terrier followed him.

It was evident that the captain's company was an honour neither expected nor desired. None bade him welcome; and I returned what I thought an impertinent salutation, with what Mrs. Malaprop calls "proper spirit." Daly frowned, his wife blazed, Lucinda pouted, and I looked on, a quiet, but not an inattentive spectator.

"Why the divil do none of you bid me sit down?" was the intruder's opening address. "Lucy, your nose will soon be as red as the old bird's—kiss me? Pooh! how coy you are! Mother Daly, mix me a tumbler—same strength as the last you take before you go to bed."—"Me drink, you scoundrel!" cried the lady, firing at the charge.

"Lucy, what a loss you were at,—should have taken me at the hop, and gone to the ball. Why, there was not such a turn-out these three years. Nicked Ralph Shaughnessy, by-the-bye. Bet

him ten pound to five, that I danced a set bare-legged. Slipped out, peeled, got boot-boy and brushes, laid on Day and Martin, blacked and polished—returned, pulled out Miss M'Affee, who's blind as a beetle. Hands across—down the middle—finished the set—and won the money before a soul knew skin from silk."

"Lord, what lies you tell," said Mrs. Daly.—"Lies! By this virgin hand!" and he kissed his own, "I have not bounce since I swore you never——" and he finished the sentence in pantomime, by turning his little finger upwards, in an elevation that conveyed his meaning correctly. The lady understood it, for she seized the kettle, and menaced hostile demonstrations.—"Phil O'Moore, don't raise me—don't I say; or, by all the crosses in a Scotsman's kilt! I'll scald ye if I hang for it!"

The captain seemed alarmed, and fell back a pace or two. "Phoo!" he exclaimed, "a joke's a joke; and you know I love you! If old bare-bones,"—and he pointed to the master of the revels—"was planted, I'd make you Mistress O'Moore. But I expect some company, and you'll give me the *matarials*, wont't ye?"—"Not a drap—not as much as would blind a midge. Off wid ye, Phil Moore, don't provoke me."

"Don't call me nicknames, Mother Daly. Will you stick an O before the Moore, if you please, and not dock me as if I was a Daly. But the matarials"—and he dashed his hands into the sugar-bowl, and transported the contents into the capacious pockets of his hunting-frock. His next clutch was at the bottle, but in that Mrs. Daly anticipated him.

"Lend it to me, *jewel!* give it, *astore!*" quoth the commander, changing his battery from force to flattery.—"Not a drap: not so much as would pison ye. Arrah! for shame—sind out and buy it, as yeer neighbours do."

"If I have a tester to bless myself upon, may I be hanged or married! Choose your worst," said he of the red jacket; "I lost my money at lansquenet, and my boots dancing in a bonfire."—"Well," returned the dame, "and ye stole one in its place!"—"No; I borrowed it, as I will the *poteein*. I was up at cockcrow—meandered through the inn—and at a bagman's door, found a boot that fitted me. I pulled it on—and left a leg and top, in place of a leg and bottom. Do give me the stuff; the ladies will be waiting."—"*Ladies!* not a drap."—"You won't?"—"I won't!" repeated Mrs. Daly. "By this cross! I won't," and she described a mysterious figure on the table with her finger.

"Why, then, by this cross, you will!" rejoined the commander, undoing the straps of the portmanteau, which he kicked upon the floor, and then jumped on the sofa. Captain Daly anticipating coming danger, mounted the sideboard. A squall from the lady hostess, a shriek from Miss Lucinda followed—while, after a twist or two, a badger evolved from the valise, and, attacked by the terrier, trundled under the table, and a furious combat between the quadrupeds commenced.

Both ladies had gained a chair, and with shame I acknowledge that I was fairly on the table. Philip O'Moore by encouraging yells excited the dog; while, favoured by the angular disposition of the sideboard, the badger offered a stout resistance. "Mind your legs, ladies; his bite's mortal. Are ye safe, Captain Daly?" said the proprietor.

"Sibby, for the sake of the Virgin! give him the bottle!" was the reply.—"Take it," said the lady, "and my black curse along wid it! Balfe the robber was a born gintleman to you, Phil Moore!"—"Honour bright—is the whisky mine? Say the word, Mother Daly, and I'll manage long-nose in a hurry," cried he of the red coat, as with his dog's assistance he secured the badger; then, seizing the bottle, he made his exit with a view-halloo that nearly deafened us, and retreated to his own den.

His absence restored order; Captain Daly descended from the sideboard, and the ladies resumed their chairs. Tony was directed to get a grilled bone; and in the interim, Mrs. Daly proposed a game at cards, and *Five-and-forty* was the one selected. Lucy and I were partners; and after an hour's play, I found myself minus a pound, and very desperately enamoured. Never was a man more delighted with his evening's entertainment than I when I retired for the night. True, I had lost a bank-note; but Lucy had pressed my foot under the table with her own, and that was surely worth the money twice told.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE AND PIQUET.

"Up rose the yellow moon—
The devil's in the moon for mischief; they
Who call'd her chaste, methinks, began too soon
Their nomenclature; there is not a day,
The longest, not the twenty-first of June,
Sees half the business in a wicked way,
On which three single hours of moonshine smile—
And then she looks so modest all the while!"

BYRON.

I FOUND country quarters far more agreeable than I imagined, when ordered off from Drogheda: and in a few days made myself pretty comfortable in my rackety room, and the adjacent closet my dormitory, to which I became hourly more attached, as it was next to Miss Lucinda's chamber, with whom, by means of a decayed panel in the wainscot, I maintained a sort of Pyramus and Thisbe communication. My military duties were not severe, as I had only to accompany the gauger when he required assistance, in turn of duty with the cynic and the fiddler. With these brethren of the sword, my intimacy was never great. The former offended me by the severity of his remarks upon the Daly family, and more particularly Miss Lucinda. The fiddler was a fool, a bore, and a bigot; he believed firmly in the intercession of holy women, used holy water, frequented holy wells, and declared that heaven was unattainable by any means but a fish diet.

With Captain O'Moore I held a guarded intercourse. I found him eternally a borrower, and greatly disposed to treat me as a school-boy, if I would but allow it. Indeed, he was anything but a safe companion. Twice he persuaded me to shoot in his company. On the first expedition, he managed to upset a cobble, in which we were ferrying ourselves over to an island in a lake, and gave me a swim for my life, which I preserved with the loss of my fowling-piece. On the other occasion, he fired at a gamekeeper, and, to stop a prosecution, we were obliged to buy off

the wounded man, the subsidy coming from my purse ; for, to do him justice, I never saw any portion of the circulating medium in his possession during our acquaintance, except what he won from me in teaching me piquet ; a course of which he recommended as an essential accomplishment for a military man. My neighbours, the Dalys, were, therefore, my chief companions—indeed, we nearly lived together. Not that this society was altogether the most desirable, for he, poor man! was miserably henpecked, and she a regular white sergeant, who swore like a trooper. But Lucy was the magnet that attracted me ; and if we ever dreamed of establishing a Platonic flirtation, her honoured parents gave us the best of fair-play, and showed, by leaving us everlastingly together, how highly they estimated our prudence and discretion.

Among Lucy's numerous accomplishments she might honestly include bold and graceful riding. She had a very pretty roan pony ; and when the weather permitted it, we rode over the country *tête-à-tête*, wherever fancy directed.

I had now been a month detached ; March was going out with its proverbial mildness, and, seduced by the fineness of the day, we had prolonged our ride, and found it later than usual when we alighted at the barrack-door. The cynic was standing on the steps, yet he offered no assistance to my fair companion in dismounting ; and I thought his cold acknowledgment, as she passed him, had more of a sneer than a smile in his expression. I felt piqued, and I would have been happy to have resented it had I only known how ; but when a man seeks a quarrel, it is wonderful how soon fortune stands his friend.

That night the gauger sent in a requisition for a party. From a cause which it is unnecessary to explain, it was doubtful on whom the turn of duty fell ; and whether the honour of attending the exciseman should devolve upon me, the cynic, or the fiddler, was what lawyers call a point for argument. Indeed, under common circumstances, the thing would not have caused me a thought ; the duty was but an agreeable night-walk, and never at a sweeter season did Philistines disturb an honest distiller. But I had private reasons for wishing to avoid still-hunting ; and besides, I was smarting under a real or imaginary discourtesy.

We met in the orderly-room ; O'Moore was there, and I think encouraged the cynic, and increased the misunderstanding between us. Words ran high ; I was petulant, and he positive ; the breach widened, until after delivering myself of a speech that I opined would require a hostile message, I left the room abruptly. It is right to say, that the fiddler, from a characteristic love of harmony, I suppose, when matters looked squally, good-naturedly cut short the cause of controversy, by taking the duty himself.

Youth will be foolish. A free, untrammelled boyhood, a precocious maturity of constitution, intercourse with wild society, familiarity with wild opinions ; all united in pushing me upon the stage of manhood years before a more delicate frame or a more regular and refined education would have permitted it. I had entered the world ; I felt myself the member of a chivalrous profession ; the object, for the first time, of woman's love—and fancied myself an ill-used man, when, in years and experience of human life, I was no better than a forward school-boy.

Still in high dudgeon, I walked up and down the court-yard, when a tap upon the shoulder made me turn briskly round, and Aylmer stood beside me.

"I have sought you, Mr. Blake——"

I interrupted him—"And I trust found me readily. But would not your friend save some trouble to us both?"

Aylmer smiled. "I am afraid I must disappoint you, Mister Blake, and you will have to look out for somebody else to practise at. No, no ; when Frank Aylmer wants a quarrel, he must look for some other than Cæsar Blake's son."

I started ; and he continued—

"I knew not till a few minutes since that you were the son of my valued friend.—Yes, I was his comrade and companion, when my years were as green as your own ; and he saved my commission by sacrificing his. But no more of this now ; we will talk of it to-morrow. See, where that cowardly scoundrel"—and he pointed to O'Moore, who was evidently watching the result—"is straining eye and ear to ascertain whether his wishes will be gratified by our quarrelling. Leave him in uncertainty. Jack, be on your guard ; you are at this moment on the verge of ruin ; but I can—I will save you, and to-morrow shall tell how." He wrung my hand, and left me more astonished than I can describe. I came out, dying for an opportunity to mark my dislike of Aylmer, and I returned with a brotherly regard for that very man, whom, but a few minutes back, I was anxious to assassinate as gentlemen do the thing.

I entered my room a sadder man by far than when I perambulated the court-yard with an impending duel on my hands. Something in Aylmer's warning to me, and his manner to the Dalys, raised up a thousand teasing and alarming doubts. What was the danger—whence was the blow to come—and how was it to be avoided? I could not even conjecture, and I wished earnestly for morning to arrive, when I should meet my father's friend, and learn the whole. For a while this uncertainty annoyed me, but gradually apprehension wore away, and other and softer feelings succeeded.

Never on a lovelier night did a young ensign peep from a barrack-window. The moon—the beautiful moon, round as a drum-head, was shining gloriously. The river murmured sweetly, the breeze had sighed its last, and not a sound was heard but the barking of the village dogs, and measured tread of the sentry walking "his lonely round" beneath me. "There is a dangerous silence in that hour," singeth my Lord Byron ; and so have all poets sung, from William Shakspeare to Walter Scott ; for it appears,

> "The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
> Sheds beauty and deep softness o'er the whole,
> Breathes also to the heart, and o'er it throws
> A loving langour, which is not repose."

All this I felt, no doubt ; for though wisdom had cried in the street, I was, alas! insensible to her warning.

Confound poetry and old houses! The chink in the wainscot, originally so limited in its dimensions as to barely permit a billet to slip through, had gradually enlarged until "Lalla Rookh"

found room enough to pass; daily the woodwork became more rickety and infirm; and the panel at last dropped out altogether!

This was an unfortunate accident, and what was to be done? I proposed that we should consult a carpenter; but Lucy, an older soldier than I, prudently explained the danger; we might be brought in for barrack damages, and therefore agreed, that for our short time we would prop it up as we best could, and keep the misfortune to ourselves. Yet, as it turned out afterwards, it would have been better had we called in the carpenter.

I said that Captain O'Moore had kindly undertaken to instruct me in piquet; but I found him an expensive master, as he would only play for money, he being an enemy to misspending time. Now, Lucy suggested, that she, though not an adept, was partial to that game—we could play together—and doubtless, a mutual improvement would bless our efforts. As a companion, Lucy was infinitely preferable; and, as a teacher, greatly cheaper. The captain played for half-crowns, and won invariably. Poor Lucy wagered nothing but kisses, and regularly rose a loser.

There is a cursed fascination attending play that ruins half the world. I, God knows! have proved it. Games of chance are bad—hells destructive—but piquet I look upon as doubly dangerous—it is a quiet, scientific, sentimental sort of business, and never played comfortably but in sober *tête-à-tête*. Captain Daly was an early man, and his lady said a thousand times, that one hour's sleep before midnight was worth a dozen after it. Lucy and I were no sluggards; and, in the innocency of our hearts, thought there could be no harm in playing a sober game ourselves. It was but stepping through the panel; nobody would be the wiser; and if we made mistakes, there was no critical eye to comment on our blundering.

Nor did we determine on this course of cards without due consideration. At a late hour, lights, if seen in either of our apartments, might occasion observation. This, young ladies, no matter how conscious they may be of integrity of intention, should eschew. Lucy, to do her justice, said so; and to avoid giving any handle to idle gossip, discovered that candles were unnecessary, for, as we played on honour, moonlight would do.

God help us! little did we imagine how rudely our harmless amusement would be interrupted! How our piquet-playing was discovered I never ascertained, as the secret of the panel was only known to Lucy and myself; but no doubt, some unlucky *mal-adresse* caused our ruin.

It had struck two, and I remember the deal was Lucy's. Suddenly we heard a whispering without—we listened—it ceased.—Pshaw; it was only the servants retiring to Mount Rascal, as they termed the garret. It was no illusion. After a brief pause Captain Daly thundered at the door, and demanded admittance. Of course I prepared to abdicate: though easily resolved, this was more difficult to accomplish; for, by accident or treachery, Mother Daly had gained an entrance into my apartments, and like a determined warrior, threw herself into the breach—I mean the broken panel.

Meanwhile, the lock of Lucy's door yielded; and an angry father and Captain O'Moore presented themselves. Mrs. Daly would have joined the company, but in the essay she stuck fast in the orifice, and after various and painful efforts was obliged to abandon the attempt, and unite herself with the main body, by the customary means of entrance.

Alas! everything appeared against us. Piquet by moonlight was considered most irregular—O'Moore laughed at the idea—and the very cards declared unfavourably; for, on examination, it appeared that in the hurry of the moment we had been playing from the whole pack!

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSEQUENCES.

"Is't wise or fitting causeless to explore
For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?"
BYRON.

"Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow! To do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance!
The Rivals.

NEVER since the birth of Hoyle, did two of his admirers cut a more ridiculous figure than did myself and the captain's heiress. Tony, to add to our embarrassment, introduced a pair of candles—while she hid herself in the window-curtains, and I stood doggedly awaiting the result of discovery in mute astonishment. Mrs. Daly's opening salutation was astounding. This night would be the death of her!—her darling husband would not long survive a broken heart!—and, as to the best of daughters—meaning thereby Miss Lucinda—why the sooner the cold grave was her portion the better! Thus, for my unhappy partiality for piquet, it was quite clear that I would be the direct cause of annihilating a whole family, and demolish the Dalys, root and branch.

Nor was the captain, though generally a man of peace, unmoved on this occasion. Whether it was for instant action or stage effect, I shall not pretend to say, but certainly he looked very formidable, as he had tucked his old toasting-iron under his arm. To do him justice, he never attempted to draw; but, as he muttered something about "reparation or satisfaction," he touched the hilt repeatedly. Captain O'Moore was still more desperate; his speech was almost the echo of his friend's, but far more truculent; for he changed the "or" into "and," insisting that I should marry on the spot, and give Captain Daly a meeting at daylight, and that into the bargain. As if the uproar was not loud enough, Tony thought proper to show that he was not insensible to the family misfortune. Approaching his young mistress, he set up a yell that would have startled a funeral. "Warroo! warroo! warroo!"* he exclaimed, "Miss Lucy dare—arrah! tell us the worst at once, and make your parents aisy, by sayin' ye are ruined!"

Now, however I might tolerate reproaches from the captain and his lady, I felt no inclination to listen to the hectoring of O'Moore, or Tony's jeremiads. With a thundering box I stretched the valet on the carpet, and changed his lament into roars of murder, that would

* A Connaught ebullition of distress.

frighten a fair. Indeed, had the noise not already awakened the household, Tony's outcries would have disturbed the sleeping beauty. Every inmate of the mansion, in all varieties of costume, was seen peeping through open doors, or craning over the banisters ; while, to my relief, and the manifest confusion of both the commanders, the cynic, in night-gown and slippers, added himself to the group already collected "in my lady's chamber."

Aylmer's appearance was the signal for a fresh display of Mother Daly's grief, and her lord's threats of vengeance ; but, after the first burst, they ceased, for it was astonishing with what composure and indifference the cynic regarded this affecting scene. He requested, in the coolest tone imaginable, to be informed "Why he was awakened?" and hinted, that if at two o'clock in the morning it was our fancy to amuse ourselves with hide-and-seek, we should not fall to loggerheads about the game ; and also, confine our gambols to the lower story. Then came a general attempt at explanation ; but, as we all opened together, detached portions of our respective speeches only could be heard. Mrs. Daly talked of matrimony and ruination ; her husband of honourable redress ; Captain O'Moore opined that an immediate meeting was unavoidable ; and I muttered something, "about innocence and a fondness for piquet." After listening with polite attention, Aylmer appeared to comprehend the business tolerably ; begged to speak to his young friend, meaning me, for a few moments ; and without waiting a reply, beckoned me to follow, which I did, although O'Moore seemed inclined to make a demonstration towards the door and refuse me egress.

We entered my apartment. "You have made a pretty kettle of fish of this affair," said the cynic.

I began to lay the blame on cards and rotten woodwork. "Pshaw!" he continued, "we have no time for nonsense. Tell me, my good sir, what is it your intention to do? I promised last evening to be your friend, although I did not then anticipate how promptly my good offices would be required. You appear to have two choices—matrimony, or a fight. If you decide upon entering the holy estate, you will need a friend to assist at the ceremony, which I presume will be immediate." I shook my head. "Nay, early marriage has its advocates. In your case it may be for the best : your lady has considerable moral and military experience—and the advantage of you by five or six years. No doubt you will club, pay, and form a delightful family party. Mrs. Daly will brew the punch, make the puddings, and scold the servant ; the captain rock the cradle, and dry-nurse yours or anybody's babe, belonging to the establishment. And then, the example ! that is worth all besides : a steady —sober—virtuous married man at sixteen ! Why you will live in story !"

I could not but smile at the flattering picture of domestic felicity that I was to realise ; and he continued :—

"Then you are not for matrimony, I perceive ; you prefer settling matters in another way : and in that case too, you will require a friend."

I thanked him for his kindness, and begged to commit myself entirely to his directions.

"Very well," said my counsellor ; "the sooner a bad business is ended, the better. I presume you have no particular fancy for shooting at that scarecrow of a captain?"—"Indeed I have not. Fire at him, under any circumstances, I shall not. Of course I must meet him, and allow him to target me for a shot or two."

"I think not. But come, we must join them. Reject matrimony altogether. Then will O'Moore insist upon an immediate shooting-match. Decline wasting powder upon Daly, and turn on his coadjutor with the ferocity of a tiger-cat. Never under a lion's exterior was concealed a more coward heart. Do this, and I will stake an orange-peeling against Miss Lucy's character—and those are heavy odds—that you sleep in a whole skin to-night, and suffer no more in purse than person, excepting in reparation of the wainscot that between you and Lucy was so unfortunately broken down."

If Aylmer and I had fortified ourselves with secret council, I suspect the captains and the ladies had been similarly engaged. The scene of the interview was delicately changed from the fair one's room to the commander's chamber ; Miss Lucy, of course, being left to indulge in "secret sorrow." There was much awkwardness when we presented ourselves. I took courage, and commenced by bearing most honourable testimony to the moral conduct of Miss Daly and myself. "Appearances might be unfavourable ; but we were young : it was foolish certainly to play cards when we should be sleeping ; but, after all, it was only an error in judgment, and circumspection for the future must redeem our mistake."

During my address, which I considered very conclusive in re-establishing the lady's reputation, the captain preserved a sulky silence ; O'Moore exhibited symptoms of incredulity ; and Mother Daly threatened to become hysterical. With difficulty, between sobs and sighs, she made her plaint. "Mr. Bleak," meaning me, "might clear himself ; but if he took the vestment, who would believe the story? Lucy—the Lord look down upon her !—had got a blast ;—and nobody worth a pair of traheeins * would, in matrimony, touch her with the tongs. Blessed be God ! her daughter was a gentlewoman. She had not much money, it was true, but the little she had was ready—none of your Galway securities, or Roscommon rent-charges, but Lord Tireragh's note of hand for five hundred pounds, attested by two living witnesses, and recoverable in three terms, as any attorney would declare."

Then Captain O'Moore figured in. "The business," he said, "was ridiculous ; the thing was in a nutshell. He was a soldier—he could stand anything ; but, honour bright ! who the devil would believe such balderdash? Piquet was a good game,—he, the captain liked it : no man understood play better—bones and billiards, drafts or dominoes, all the same. He had lost fifty on the bellows, and won five hundred on the plate-warmer ; but, by moonlight, he had never touched paper. It was all Tara-hill talk : Lucy was left without a rag of reputation, and had no more character than a priest's niece."

Mr. Aylmer thought "Further discussion was

* *Traheeins* are the legs of Connemara stockings, which case the limbs of the traveller, without cramping his toes. They are much worn by gentlemen who consider shoes superfluous.

unnecessary; it was better to come to business at once. Might he inquire, under the present unpleasant circumstances, what was expected from his young friend?"

Mrs. Daly lost no time in responding. "It was a shame for Mr. Aylmer to ask such a silly question; she would have expected more sinse from an ould officer and a staid* man. Nothing at all at all was wanted, but Misther Bleak should make her little girl an honest woman, that was all."

"And should Mr. Blake—for it was impossible to account for the fancies of young gentlemen—feel indisposed to contract matrimony at sixteen?"

"Oh! then the course was straight as a halbert. Honour bright! sod directly—no delay—ten paces—and fire away till one was nicked!"

"And who, Captain O'Moore, is it your good pleasure should be thus agreeably amused?" said I.

In reply, he pointed to the little commander, who seemed horribly alarmed at the pleasant prospect his friend's alternative placed before him, and then nodded to me.

"Allow me, sir," I replied, "to cut short this matter, by telling you plainly and decisively that I will not marry; and I altogether decline the honour of shooting at Captain Daly."—"What, not fight! and hold a commission in the —— regiment?"

"Softly, gallant sir: that I have *not* said. Fight I will. He who presumes to doubt my courage, may prove it as speedily as he pleases; and if any man dares assert that Miss Lucinda's unhappy interview with me was anything but innocent and accidental, I shall crop his ears off, and indeed, I feel strong inclination to commence with one of the present company;" and I fixed my eye upon the bravo. His colour waned; he looked black as midnight, clenched his fist, and appeared half inclined to strike me. I stepped back, and taking my sabre from a chair, where I had accidentally thrown it after coming from evening parade, continued: "Captain O'Moore, if I am understood aright, it will be unnecessary to add a word to what I have spoken. Your friend (for with you I hold no farther conversation) will find me readily. I have been the cause of detaining too long from bed this good company. Come, Aylmer." I bowed formally to Captain Daly—lower still to his lady wife—brushed clothes with Philip O'Moore—and left the room, followed by the cynic.

Obvious reasons induced me to abandon my own chamber for a temporary shakedown on Aylmer's sofa. Neither of us, however, felt inclined to seek our couches: tumblers were paraded, the kettle boiled, and down we sat to talk over the night's adventures, and arrange measures to meet any legal or honourable consequences that might attend piquet-playing by moonlight. Morning dawned before our conclave ended; and from the shrewd and caustic remarks that during our *tête-à-tête* fell from my singular companion, I perceived he was one who had studied mankind deeply, and I longed to hear from his own lips, what I suspected would be a strange detail—his history.

* *Staid* is synonymous with *steady*.

CHAPTER IV.

CONFESSIONS OF A CYNIC.

"'Tis said that persons living on annuities
Are longer lived than others—God knows why,
Unless to plague the grantors—yet so true it is,
That some, I really think, do never die;
Of any creditors, the worst a Jew it is,
And that's their mode of furnishing supply:
In my young days they lent me cash that way,
Which I found very troublesome to pay."
Don Juan.

"Well, that's the prettiest shawl—as I'm alive!
You'll give it me?" *Beppo.*

BREAKFAST ended, morning parade was over, and neither friendly nor hostile visitor appeared—none of the *dramatis personæ* of last night honoured the barrack-yard with their presence—the fiddler alone answered the call of duty; and it seemed that by general consent, the command of the garrison would devolve upon the descendant of Orpheus.

More than once, during our *tête-à-tête*, Aylmer supported his opinions by a reference to personal experience, and I pressed him to tell me his private history. He smiled.

"I believe, my dear Blake, I shall best point the moral I am preaching by doing so, and prove to you how easily young gentlemen can ruin themselves. I shall not be tedious. I entered the world an orphan, and at sixteen—my fortune a pair of colours and a few hundred pounds. I had a good constitution, animal spirits in abundance, and as much knowledge of the world as a certain Lothario of my acquaintance, who shall be nameless.

"My early military career is so closely connected with your father's history, that I shall merely tell you that I assisted in despoiling Miss Macnamara's supper, and in stuffing her chimney afterwards. To me the consequences might have been ruinous; but your father saved my commission and sacrificed his own. I heard of his death in Jamaica, where we were soon after sent; and it is not for me to add how bitterly the untimely fate of my generous friend distressed me.

"We continued in the West Indies for five years, broiling under a tropical sun, and tormented by a tyrannical colonel. Conceive my delight when, by the most unexpected freak of fortune, I found myself liberated from the thrall of an ill-tempered martinet, and owner of ten thousand pounds in stock, and fifteen hundred a year in dirty acres. A relative, too distant for me to build on for anything beyond a mourning-ring, had pleased to register me his heir—and a man who would not have assisted me in purchasing a sword-knot, left me the scrapings-up of a long and miserly existence.

"I did not dally, as you may believe, in Jamaica. Directly Up-Park was abandoned, I threw myself into the first sugar-ship that sailed—"courier-like," reached the shores of Britain—exchanged into a light-cavalry regiment, which in six months I left for the Blues.

"I was twenty-two that very day on which I mounted my first guard at St. James's. I was tolerably well-looking, pliable enough to adapt myself to the fripperies of fashion, with a round sum at Hammersley's and an income sufficient for more than moderate enjoyment of the numerous pleasures which the most profligate

capital in Europe offers to the youthful voluptuary. I had, or ought to have had, some knowledge of the world, for I entered on the theatre of life as early as yourself; and I should have known the value of money, having so long existed on the miserable pay of a lieutenant; yet, in three years, I dissipated a goodly inheritance, and was a ruined man at twenty-five!"

"And how, in this brief space," said I, interrupting him, "could you manage to wreck your fortunes so completely?"

The cynic smiled bitterly.

"Nothing more easily effected, my boy; with the assistance of a noble earl, two or three lords, a baronet, half-a-dozen M.P.'s, a club, a hell, and a woman.

"You must know, that among my fancies, I had determined, whenever it pleased me to contract matrimony, to select a high-born wife. I, the descendant of an ancient line, could not contaminate my blood by a union with aught but some scion from a noble tree. Now, the gallant lord who commanded my troop was heir to one of the oldest marquisates in Britain: he condescended, from the moment I joined, to patronise me; gradually we became inseparable: and in due time were accounted the Pylades and Orestes of the Blues. Indeed, never was youthful friendship more warm and disinterested: he brought me everywhere; introduced me to his family; put me up in a club: his friends were mine; his tradesmen supplied me; I would not purchase a pointer without his consent; and, at last, did all but swear by him.

"He was, poor fellow, miserably embarrassed; but his distresses, when I discovered them, interested me for him the more. I had money unemployed at my banker's, and would I allow my kind and noble friend to be inconvenienced for a thousand? No, I offered him assistance—it was freely and liberally accepted! and in return, he taught me play, made arrangements for me with a *figurante*, allowed me to share in his turf speculations, and was to me more than a brother. Yet fortune frowned upon him constantly: his horses broke down—his run at cards was abominable;—but, hang the jade! she has been notorious always for treating men of merit scurvily.

"My friend had a sister, rather *passée* and proud as Lucifer. She was a fine woman, however; and her blood, Jack—her progenitors had ridden side by side with the Norman bastard, and scrawled their autographs to Magna Charta in the field of Runnymede. What could I do but love her? and she smiled upon a suit which her brother avowedly encouraged. But, alas! there was an obstacle; her father was so lofty in his nobility, that nothing beneath an earl's coronet could be offered or entertained. Time however might do much: I was recommended patience, and of course submitted. But in private, the lady of my love was kind; she heard my vows, and told me I was not indifferent to her. We walked, and rode, and danced, and flirted until our union was chronicled in *The Morning Post*, as one of those to occur at the end of the season. But, alas! the season ended me.

"It was very remarkable how much Lady Agnes deferred to my taste in articles of fancy and *virtù*. She scarcely visited a jeweller's without me; and I was as well known at Howell and James's as their own book-keeper. Her allowance from her noble father, I found out was very small; and with an exemplary self-denial, she would have declined purchasing many a Cashmere shawl or *recherché* muff, had I not delicately contrived to pay for them, and force her to honour me by their acceptance. She loved *bijouterie* dearly; but the same high principle prevented her indulging expensive inclinations. But I rarely failed in discovering the object of her fancy, procured it directly, and laid it an offering on her shrine. And was I not well rewarded? When I placed the gem upon her finger, I pressed the beautiful hand of a peeress in her own right; and if the gift was unusually magnificent, her lips were not refused to mine; and I experienced the exquisite delight of kissing a descendant of the Conqueror! Never were a lover's favours more graciously and gracefully acknowledged—never woman's gratitude warmer; although, indeed, we never played moonlight piquet—because, probably, Lady Agnes was too much an adept to waste time and instructions on a bungler.

"Meanwhile, my funds diminished fast; my account at Hammersley's was overdrawn; my rents anticipated by drafts upon my agent; and I was booked by every West-end tradesman, from the coach to the cane-maker.

"This was an awkward discovery; but I was not inclined to sink a fallen star without a struggle. As yet I had never tried my hand at bill or bond, except to oblige my dear friend, Lord ——, whom I joined in securities for some thousands. The tribe of Israel were untouched—there was a mine in reserve, an El Dorado waiting for my acceptance. I mentioned to my noble companion that I was hard-up, and then indeed he proved his friendship. He introduced me to his own solicitor—none of your city scribes, your East-end pettifoggers—but a regular four-in-hander who did the business of the Guards; in money matters liberal as a prince, and in delicates ones, 'close as a pill-box;' in short, as my noble friend averred, he was 'the soul of honour.'

"It was late that day when I dropped into Hanover-square, where the Marquis of —— was domiciled. The lamps were lighted in the streets, and morning visiting over. I found Lady Agnes in the back drawing-room quite alone; she seemed unusually out of spirits; and I, as in duty bound, tenderly inquired the cause. She continued silent, sighed heavily, and I thought I saw a tear stealing down her cheek. I put my arm gently round her waist, and, oh rapture! she leaned her head upon my bosom, and burst into a flood of tears. 'Agnes, my idolised Agnes! what is the matter? Speak to me—tell me what makes you so unhappy?'

"'Oh, Aylmer!' she murmured, 'pray don't ask it. I am foolish, very foolish, to permit my feelings to overpower me. But you, from whom I conceal nothing—no, I cannot go on. Don't ask it, dear, *dear* Aylmer!' and in the ardour of her entreaty, she turned her lips to mine, and so closely too, that they met by accident.

"All this, of course, required that I should tenderly and imperatively insist upon an explanation. At last, amidst sighs and sobs, the truth came out. Ebers had turned restive, insisted on a settlement of account, and positively refused Lady Agnes a box at the Opera, unless the subscription, a matter of some three hundred pounds,

was promptly paid. 'And has this paltry sum caused my Agnes a moment's pain?' Tears were the only answer, and tears, Jack, you will find are always forerunners of a kissing-match. I held her unresisting to my heart; told her how eternally her candour had obliged me; whispered that I would be with her soon, and hurried off from Hanover-square to procure the money, even were I to rob a church, or to take to the road, and cry, 'stand to a true man.'

"And where was money to be had? Where, but from the 'soul of honour'—the attorney. I flew to his house. Indoors he luckily was, but, most unluckily, out of cash entirely. He would, however, 'see about it immediately, and in a day or two'—'A day or two! Zounds! an hour was an age—the thing must be done instantly.' He thought a moment, put his hand across his forehead, rang the bell, called a coach; and though his dinner was ready, the kind man set off to make me happy.

"We traversed an endless extent of city, and reached at last a place eastward of all the world, denominated in 'Guides to London,' St. Mary-axe, and known to antiquaries, Jews, Bow-street runners, and old clothesmen. There he presented me, after a private colloquy in the corner, to a small, stout, smooth-visaged gentleman, who, for my note at two months for five hundred pounds, favoured me with three hundred in bank-notes, four casks of dried cod, two ditto of train-oil, and two of turpentine,—I forget the brands, but they were excellent. I inquired what the plague I was to do with fish and oil? But 'the soul of honour' at once declared, that Isaac must sell those valuables on my account; and three days afterwards I received from Mr. Solomons, per solicitor, twenty-seven pounds, thirteen shillings, and twopence, being the balance of account on stock-fish, train-oil, and turpentine, agency and brokerage deducted. Mr. Solomons regretted that the assets were not more considerable—but whales had the last season been unusually abundant—turpentine was a drug—and everybody knew that fish should be held over till Lent, and then it would realise a fortune.

"Now, from the hour I entered that sink of usury my ruin was expedited, and I went to the dogs in double-quick. My horses were sold in execution for an accommodation bond, in which I had joined my noble friend; the coachmaker seized my carriages, the figurant made away with my plate and furniture in Bruton-street, and bolted to the Continent with a *ballet-master*. The tocsin of my distress sounded, and every harpy tradesman pounced on me like hawks upon a partridge. In this exigency, I applied to my noble friend, who had mysteriously disappeared. Through 'the soul of honour' he assured me that he could not show; and acquainted me that Lady Agnes had left town suddenly, to spend the holidays with a sick aunt. By the solicitor to the Guards he favoured me with a statement of account; and it was there clear and conclusive, that by a moiety of turf-losses, balance by play, &c., &c., I was indebted to my lord a cool fifty. In short, Jack, he had cleaned me out of about twelve thousand, and his amiable sister subsidised me to the tune of three thousand more. No descendants from the Conqueror could have managed the thing better.

"My ruin was complete; my commission sold; I was betrayed by my favourite servant, after he had carried off my wardrobe; arrested, and taken to a West-end sponging-house. Then came to me the worthy solicitor, and the little gentleman of St. Mary-axe. My estates could not be sold, but they could be annuitised; and this was done so effectually, that they were totally alienated from me during the lives of the Jew, the attorney, and their wives; and on the fifth evening, I was turned out of the lock-up-house with a free foot, the clothes upon my back, and some three pounds to commence the world with again.

"Where should I head? So totally duped and ruined was I, that I felt a miserable satisfaction in knowing that fortune had done her worst. I turned mechanically westward, to view the scene of my recent folly. On my way to Bruton-street, I passed through Hanover-square, and, wrapped in my cloak, from the opposite palisades indulged in a farewell look at the mansion of my friend, the noble marquis. Just then a carriage came round, and a female, full-dressed, descended the steps. I gazed, and by the clear lamp-light recognised 'the lady of my love,' going to an Oratorio at Drury Lane! Her visit to her sick aunt had been marvellously short! Off rolled the carriage, and I proceeded on my pilgrimage.

"I crossed Bond-street and stopped before my own house. It was dark as Erebus: not a light glimmered in hall or window, for it was untenanted and unfurnished. And there, one week ago, I had been master—there, night after night I luxuriated in splendid dissipation—for me the glass sparkled—on me woman smiled—and mirth, and wit, and music, added their charms to the blandishments of beauty. Where were these now? Fled like a vision; the false one in another land; the friend, proven and found worthless; the host, a dupe, an outcast, and a beggar! I laughed bitterly; for everything I saw, reminded me I was ruined. The carriages that passed, the liveried menials that elbowed me, the soldiers that I met—all brought associations that maddened; I could not breathe the very air in common with them, and rushing through the most obscure streets, never stopped, until I found myself close to the Tower.

"I entered a low tavern, but quitted it hastily, for it was a military house of call, and I might there meet those who would remember me. Going out, I jostled against a sergeant, and his exclamation was an Irish one: I spoke in return, and the native tongue, to which I had so often listened before I knew aught of man's villany, came 'like music' on my ear. The soldier told me he was going down next day to Gravesend, to embark with a detachment for his regiment on the Peninsula. I asked him, as we strolled along, to take a glass—we stepped into the Black Horse on Tower Hill—and Captain Aylmer, *quondam* of the Blues, was soon in close conversation with Sergeant O'Callaghan of the 'Faugh-a-ballaghs,' over half a pint of brandy in a pot-house—and well would it have been for Captain Aylmer that he had always kept as honest company.

"While thus engaged, the barmaid brought in the evening paper. I took it up, threw my eyes carelessly over its columns, and there my name appeared most honourably recorded. I occupied no less than four paragraphs, all being extracted from morning contemporaries.

"In the first, it was intimated, *with regret*, 'that

a gallant captain, who last week retired somewhat suddenly from the Household Brigade, had exchanged his house in Bruton-street for apartments *in Banco Regis*.'

"In the second, the editor gave a flat contradiction to 'a report that had crept into the Sunday prints, relative to an intended alliance between an ex-captain of the Blues, and a beautiful daughter of the house of Arlingford. What made this *on dit* the more absurd was, that the Lady Agnes was shortly to bestow her hand upon Sir Peter Mackinnon, the celebrated Indian *millionaire*.'

"A third paragraph asserted, that the aforesaid Peter 'had amassed his immense wealth by speculations in opium, and not indigo, as stated in the *Times* of yesterday.'

"But the fourth topped the business bravely. In it there was no affected mystification; no dash or asterisks; for the worthy editor, like an honest man, spoke plainly out.

"'The recent break-down of Captain Aylmer of the Blues has occasioned a prodigious sensation in the different clubs. He is a defaulter, it is whispered, to the tune of sixty thousand pounds. The tribe of Judah, and certain West-end money-scriviners, are stated to be the principal sufferers. How the captain kept up appearances so long, seems extraordinary. We are sorry to say that the Earl of A—gf—d, who had procured for this unprincipled adventurer an *entrée* to the most fashionable circles, will be a very heavy loser. He had been unfortunately induced by the ex-captain, whose manners were exceedingly plausible, to join in some turf engagements. These proving unsuccessful, their discharge devolved upon the noble earl, who, with that high and chivalrous spirit that distinguishes the house of Ar—gf—d, paid them most honourably. Captain Aylmer passed through Canterbury on Friday night, at fourteen minutes past eleven, in a chaise and four; and having by an hour and a quarter the start of his pursuers, there is little doubt but he has reached Boulogne, that *refugium peccatorum*, safely.'

"Was not this a brave finale, Jack? Ruined; left without home, profession, resources, or a second shirt; stripped to my last guinea; it was necessary to load me with abuse, and not only prove to the world that I was undone, but brand me as a knave and swindler; while my titled plunderers not only escaped an *exposé*, but, by slandering their ruined dupe, built up their tottering reputations!

"Had I not already determined to fly from the scene of weakness in me and perfidy in others, this unblushing falsity of public opinion would have driven me to take this step. The sergeant appeared a providential agent to assist my plans. I proposed myself as a volunteer for the 'Connaught Rangers,' and right willingly my overture was accepted; for seldom did so good a recruit offer himself. My purse contained some silver. I required, it is true, few necessaries; but where were they to be had—where the means to come from? I, who three months before, could present a peeress with an opera-box, wanted sufficient funds to purchase slop-clothing for the outfit of a private soldier.

"I thought, in this exigency, of the Jew. He lived hard by, and surely he would not refuse me a few pounds. Leaving my companion for a while, I hastened to the usurer's domicile. I reached the gloomy street, environed by lanes and alleys, the haunts of vice and villany. It was past seven on a Saturday; his sabbath was over, and lights glimmered in his den, and told that Isaac had resumed his secular employment of authorised and legal robbery. I entered his filthy hall, opened the side-door, and stood before the astonished Israelite, who was busily occupied in weighing old plate behind his counter; and, no doubt, the better part of it was stolen.

"Mechanically, he uncovered himself, placed his dingy hat upon a stool, and then with the same imperturbable attempt at silkiness, as if I were an unplucked victim, said—

"'What may your commands be, Captain Aylmer?'

"He spoke with some little hesitation, when he marked my kindling eye.

"'Good sir, my business is but small. I want money; a trifle will do.'—'Why! Captain——'

"'Pshaw! drop the title; you have among you uncaptained me.'—'Well, I thought you were in France, and safe from——'

"'Whom?' I exclaimed, 'Have I anything left worth robbing? No! you want a new man, Isaac!'—'Nay, captain, I mean from the pursuit of sheriff's officers,' said the Jew.

"'Oh! bailiffs. Pray what would they want with me? You, and your brother-plunderer the attorney, have had more than sufficient assets to pay the other harpies. You engaged to do so—at least it was in the bond—was it not, Isaac?'—'Oh, yes, certainly! But there were much moneys due; and some creditors might not be merciful and wait!'

"'Fy, fy! Isaac! you libel them: they are all merciful men—indeed they are *very merciful!* They have taken all—blood, marrow, vitals!—Phoo! the carcass is not worth the price of seizure! But the money?'

"'What money?' asked the Jew.—'Ten pounds.'—'As God will judge me! I have but one guinea in the house, and it is a light one!'—'Isaac, thou liest!'

"He swore a deep Hebrew imprecation. I waxed desperate. A large ebony ruler lay upon the counter; and as I took it accidentally in my hand, the devil whispered that it would be a good deed to knock out the usurer's brains, and lessen the number of my annuitants. But suddenly the Jew's eye brightened as it caught the sparkle of a gem upon my finger. Strange enough, a ring of Pauline's, my late sultana, had required some repairs from the jeweller; been given me when passing the shop, and actually remained upon my finger unnoticed; such was the fever of my mind, that an expensive ornament was at my disposal, when I conceived my whole property lay within the narrow limits of my purse.

"'Is that a rose-diamond?' said the Israelite, in breathless anxiety.—'Yes; I bought it as such.'—'Will you part with it?'—'Ay; if I met a man who had some money. You have none!'

"I just remember that Mrs. Solomons got a commission from a friend to buy her such an article. Permit me to examine it.'

"'I looked at him. I had been so villanously robbed already, that I feared to confide my new-discovered treasure into the hands of the plunderer. 'If I trust it, you will not steal or change it?'—'Bah! you are merry, captain,' said the

Jew, with a grin.—'Merry!' I gave a fiendish laugh. 'Ay, merry I well may be. Take it—and by that prophet, your namesake, if you use aught of trickery with me now, I'll beat your brains out on the counter!'

"I pulled the ring off, he looked upon the jewel, then threw a look askance upon me, as the keeper steals a glance at a madman's eye.

"'What will you have for it?'—'Thirty pounds.'—'Bah! you jest: say half the money.'—'No, Jew, I paid fifty for it a few months since.'—'Say twenty.'—'No.'—'Twenty-five?'—'By the beard of Aaron! I'll not part with it a sixpence under thirty.'—'Well, well, wait a moment, I'll try if Mrs. S. could lend the money.'

"He rang a bell, and an old white-bearded Israelite answered it. To him he consigned the custody of the plate, disappeared behind a door concealed by a curtain, and in two minutes returned, counted down the money, rubbed the ring, spoke in Hebrew to his assistant, while I, without wasting a word upon the wretch, hurried off to join my companion.

"Well, Jack, we exchanged my clothes for others better suited to my altered estate; made some necessary purchases; retired to a double-bedded room; and next day, before the sun peeped through the dusky atmosphere of London, the ex-captain of the Blues started for Gravesend, to join a detachment of the 'Faugh-a-ballaghs.'

"I will not detain you with a narrative of my Peninsular campaigns; I bore my fallen fortunes with as much philosophy as I could muster; *roughed it* pretty well, did my duty steadily, was wounded at Badajoz and Vittoria, and returned to England serjeant-major of the regiment, and master of some hundred dollars of pay saved. Through the interest of an old schoolfellow, I got a lieutenancy in the militia; and now you have my history.

"You may be curious about my London acquaintances, and wish to know how they got on and prospered. The lady shall have, of course, the precedency. The fair descendant of the Conqueror actually married the *millionaire*, and there is not so miserable a wife within the bills of mortality. Sir Peter is a miser, and doles out grudgingly a pittance to his lady that a country-gentlewoman would reject. Her residence is an old mansion in the north, sometimes exchanged for a cheap lodging at Bath or Cheltenham, when the nabob is desired by his physician to use the waters. Her equipage, an ill-appointed chariot—her retinue a grizzled negro, and one or two clowns from Cumberland. Rebel she dares not; for the old opium-dealer arranged the settlements so adroitly, that everything is discretionary with his good pleasure. He had previously become owner of so many securities of the marquis, that the Arlingford estates were nearly at his mercy; and as he is a mean and sordid tyrant, he lords it over the 'noble house,' and makes them feel their painful dependency. No chance of an ameliorated life awaits the Lady Agnes, and from death alone can she hope emancipation from a thrall that goads her almost to madness; and yet she dares not leave or disobey a being whom she abominates. I hear his health is excellent: long may it continue so!—long may he be spared to curse the mercenary wretch—a perjurer before God's altar—a libel upon nobility—a byword among women!

"As to the earl her brother, he avoids a prison only by the privilege of a rotten borough. He, with some others of a lower caste, have been blasted for foul play. Fallen from his high and palmy state, he exists upon the bounty of a pensioned mistress, to whom, if report speaks truly, he is privately married. In short, he is almost as low in reputation as any titled swindler in the kingdom.

"Jack, there is retribution even in this world. Of four annuitants, *three* are gone to their accounts—the attorney died by his own hand, to escape the penalty of a detected forgery. None stands between me and my inheritance but the Jew—and though villains of his kind are said to live for ever, I hope to see him planted yet, and sent to father Abraham after the remainder of the gang."

Aylmer stopped, for a hackney-chaise drove into the barrack-yard. We went to the window. Presently we saw Daly's servant tie on some luggage, and down came the gallant captain in mufti, and "the best of daughters" in a sky-blue pelisse. After handing in the lady, he deposited his own person in the vehicle; the driver chirruped, the horses obeyed, and off they went like a wedding.

"Victory!" exclaimed the cynic, as the carriage rattled over the paving-stones; "the old lad," and he pointed to the floor, "to get his due, has stood your friend, Jack. Don't build on his assistance too far—he leaves gentlemen in the lurch, occasionally. But here comes dinner; bless your lucky planet, and sit down, 'with what appetite you may.'"

CHAPTER V.

JACK THE DEVIL.

"*Sir A.*—You have been too lively, Jack.
Capt. A.—Nay, sir, upon my word——
Sir A.—Come, no lying, Jack; I'm sure 'twas so. Come, no excuses, Jack—why, your father, you rogue, was so before you."

The Rivals.

EVENTS came thick upon each other. The Dalys had not departed above an hour, when the post came in, and "Ensign John Blake" appeared in the *Gazette*, promoted to a second lieutenancy in the 95th Rifles. My honest uncle had not forgotten me; and by exerting his county interest with Lord ——, obtained for me a removal to the line, and a commission in a favourite corps.

"I am truly gratified at this, my dear Jack," said Aylmer, "for I was going to counsel you to leave this regiment. It is as bad a school for a Connaught gentleman to spend his nonage in, as could be selected. You have seen a little of head-quarters: everything there irregular and disorderly—and dissipation the order of the day. The colonel sets the example; he can carry off more wine than any commander in the service, and of course his officers, like good soldiers, imitate their leader in all things. He is a singular personage, and although he and I are on but indifferent terms, I shall do him justice in my sketch. Brave as a lion—generous, if he had the means—mercenary, embarrassed, and extravagant—in short, a mass of contradictions. He has 'misused the King's press most damnably;'

his fancy is to fill the regiment, not with 'revolted tapsters,' but tradesmen, whom drunkenness induces to list, and with these he is building a village on his property. The shifts to which his necessities urge him, are often mean, and sometimes most ridiculous. He raised a hundred last summer, by furnishing the officers with gold-headed canes, he, of course, collecting the amount from the corps ; but when the cane-maker will be paid, time will best tell. A screech-owl is not more unmusical ; yet a short time ago, the commander discovered, what had escaped the observation of the master of the band, that every instrument was inharmonious—the horns were false ; trumpets fit only for the driver of a stage coach ; bassoons flat ; flutes not worth a fig ; cymbals cracked ; and the very bells upon the Turkish crescent 'jangled out of tune.' In short, every instrument was condemned, a new set provided by 'the maker to the guards,' a subsidy of four hundred put in the colonel's pocket ; for he *pouched* the band fund, and the tradesmen will be paid when the Greek kalends come round. The man is fearless ; but even this good quality in the soldier is mischievous in him, from his propensity for duelling. Not long before you joined, a subaltern was dismissed for a gross deception in an exchange of horses. Now the colonel is nineteen stone, honest weight ; but he cheerfully received a message from the delinquent, and *hipped* him next morning. The consequence was, that a fancy for fighting has crept into the corps, and there is a proneness among the younger officers to take offence where none could be intended, that makes the mess anything but a safe society, wherein to get drunk or commence an argument.

"With regard to your friends below stairs ; I fear I shall be scarce forgiven, when I inform you, that you have let slip a golden opportunity. Indeed, Jack, you had the offer of a noble alliance, and rejected it. Miss Lucinda is Captain Daly's child by courtesy and law ; but the noble Baron of Tireragh claims without dispute the honours of paternity. *Madame Mère* was daughter to his gate-keeper, found favour in his sight, and *Missy* was the result of the *liaison*. Captain Daly had the honour of receiving the lady's hand a few days before her accouchement, and thus became legally entitled to Miss Lucy. A company, a child, and a note for five hundred, rewarded the complaisance of the commander.

"Of Daly, little is known. None ever heard him mention the place of his nativity. Indeed, his profession in early life would have been equally involved in obscurity, had it not pleased his helpmate, in course of a connubial argument, to hint that he had been a wig-maker. The captain is most unfortunate in his acquaintances ; with the living he holds no intimacy ; but the moment a man is fairly coffined, then the defunct turns out to have been his bosom friend.

"O'Moore is a true Bobadil ; enacts the bully, and affects the madman. In everything appertaining to the safe keeping of his purse and person, he needs no control. His insanity is put on when required ; one while it cloaks his cowardice, and at another is a cover for his knavery.

"And, my dear Jack, was this a field for you to waste your youth in? *Here*, you would have learned jockeyship and duelling ; sapped your constitution before it was matured ; frittered your fortune away in drunkenness and debauchery ; and for all this enjoy the honourable distinction of wearing a scarlet coat, wage war against illicit distillation, and, twice a year, mount a guard of honour upon the lodgings of a judge of assize.

"I shall not inquire how your account stands, between flirtation, and pounds, shillings, and pence ; but I am certain you have come off cheaper by half than your predecessor, Mr. D'Arcy. The pony was a present from that swain ; the brown habit with the black braiding is noted in his tailor's ledger ; indeed, I suspect the greater proportion of the young lady's personals could be derived from the same source. And yet, poor man ! he was no piquet-player ; but applied for permission to marry, which his family answered by removing him by return of post.

"Jack, there are many Lucindas in the world. You have had an early lesson from Miss Daly, and an early lecture from a ruined man. Eschew fashionable profligates ; no matter whether they have sprung from the servants' hall, or are booked by Debrett. Avoid play ; it is covert robbery ;—all, from the lottery at Guildhall, to the little-go in a beer-house. Gamblers, titled and untitled, are just the same : and you will be fleeced at the billiard-table of a baron, as unmercifully as you would be plundered in a Jermyn-street hell. Remember Frank Aylmer's warning ; and, when Isaac Solomons is gathered to his fathers, I will visit you in person, and learn how far you have profited by my counsels."

* * * * * *

Events, indeed, came thickly. Napoleon had landed at Cannes, and in double-quick, was hurrying to the capital ! I, with every officer on leave, was ordered to join ; and as the ninety-fifth were at Brussels, I had not a moment to spare. The disposal of my regimental property was entrusted to Aylmer, my horse despatched to Castle Blake ; and bidding adieu to the militia in a carouse, from which a corpulent captain never recovered, and which very nearly finished my own career, I started, on recovering, for the metropolis.

To visit Connaught was impossible ; and all I could do was to see my cousin Jack pending the sailing of the packet. Accordingly, I threw myself into the Kells day-coach, and at seven o'clock in the same evening was safely landed at *The Hibernian*, in Dawson-street.

Having discussed my dinner speedily, my first care was to discover my loving kinsman. Jack was an intern disciple of the "Holy and undivided Trinity ;" and, directed by the waiter, I set out for that abode of the Muses.

Although within fifty miles, Jack and I had not seen each other since we parted at Castle Blake ; but we corresponded pretty regularly. My cousin, if his own account was true, was the most exemplary student that ever looked forward to the woolsack. Nothing indeed could surpass the sobriety of his life and morals ; and, but that an occasional allusion was made in his letters to a Miss Letitia Lightbody (who, it appeared was an ornament to her sex, and a pattern for milliners in general), I should not have been surprised to find that my friend had turned to his mother's faith, become a rigid Catholic, gave Father Roger's prophecy the lie, saved the county ex-

pense, the hangman some trouble, and died in the odour of sanctity, a second edition of St. Senanus—a gentleman canonised for celibacy by Mr. Thomas Moore—and where on such a point could a better authority be found?

It was past eight when I presented myself at the college-gate. Not being acquainted with the localities of the University, I addressed one of some half-dozen lazy-looking, blue-coated functionaries, who were lounging on benches in the porter's lodge; there keeping watch and ward beside a rousing coal-fire. There was not a corporation in Christendom who would not have chosen them "for her own," they seemed so oily and over-fed. One of these "gorbellied knaves" waddled out to answer me; and from him I discovered, that there would be some difficulty in identifying my worthy kinsman, there being six gentlemen of the name of Blake then resident in this seat of learning.

"Come, sir," said he of the blue-coat, as he assumed a leather hunting-cap and lighted lantern; "we'll make him out, never fear. I'll describe them as we go along. Here, at No. 2, ground-floor, left, lives one. They call him 'Dozey,' as he does nothing from Monday morning till Saturday night but sleep, drink beer, and set mouse-traps."—"We won't disturb him, my friend; so pass by Dozey."

"Very well, sir," continued my guide. "No. 9, garret, right—there lives another of them. He is 'Bothered Blake;' deaf, dirty, and a premium man."—"Leave the dirty gentleman alone," said I.

"Just as you please," replied the polite porter. "Will you try 31, second left? Him they have christened 'Bethesda Blake,' as he has got 'a call,' and lectures at prayer-meetings."—I shook my head.

"Then there's one in 27, lame of a leg—they call him 'Pop and carry one.'"—"The lame lad won't suit me."

"Egad! I am fairly puzzled," said my guide, "unless it's 'Jack the Devil' you are looking for."—"That's the man for a thousand!"

"Oh, then, he lives hard by. This way, sir. He chums with 'Mad Hamilton,' and they hang out 16, Botany Bay, first floor, right."—"I am so glad you'll find him for me!"—"Find him!" ejaculated the fat functionary; "the Lord only knows where he is to be found at this hour! We'll try the rooms: we may see *the skip*, or perhaps, by accident, the master. Come along."

Accordingly, we entered Botany Bay, and halted before a door, which bore in white Roman characters the names of "Mr. Blake" and "Mr. Hamilton." Knock we did manfully; "but none did come, though we did call for them."—"Ay, sir, they're out. Lord! they're the wildest gentlemen within the gates, and they're in trouble. Well, more's the pity. Last night they gave a cockle-party—and cockle-parties, sir, end badly I have remarked. All drunk—went upon the batter—and left the Brick-square and Botany Bay without a lamp, good, bad, or indifferent. They are to be before the board to-morrow; and if they escape expulsion, they're sure of being rusticated."

"Could you direct me where in town I shall have a chance of meeting Mr. Blake?" I inquired. "Not I, faith! But now I remember, that Mr. O'Donel, one of the cockle-party, came in just before yeerself: his rooms are in the next building, and we'll try if he knows."

Mounting two pairs of stairs accordingly, Mr. O'Donel in person opened his door. I briefly explained my object, and apologised for disturbing him.

"No trouble whatever; step in, sir. Hinks, will you drive a nail?" and he pointed to the table, on which divers bottles were paraded. The guide without ceremony advanced and took a glass, which the host filled.

"Bad business, Mr. O'Donel; hang it! arn't there lamps enough outside without smashing those in college?"—"Who broke them?" inquired O'Donel. "I'm out of the scrape; I was regularly sewed up, and could not have put one leg before the other, if they had made me archbishop of Canterbury. I hear they stole your lanterns, and you were so drunk that you never missed them till morning!"—"Well, well, time will tell: good night, sir." I slipped a gratuity, and he disappeared.

When alone, I explained to Jack's companion the shortness of my halt in town, and how necessary it was to find his brother in iniquity with as little delay as possible. Promptly he offered to assist my researches, premising that if he could not unkennel "Jack the Devil," then was all inquiry useless until to-morrow. "We have not a moment to lose, or I shall be shut in. We'll take Jack's regular beat, and, I have little doubt, unharbour him." Accordingly he tucked me under the arm, and off we set.

"Let me see—this is Lady Abbot's ball. Well, he won't be there, as he is out of temper. That is *nine* now striking; and probably, being in a sentimental mood, he will be taking tea with Miss Lightbody, the mantua-maker in Nassau-street. If we don't find him there, at *ten* we'll try the theatre—*Eleven*, the 'Silver Hell,' in Exchange-street—*Twelve*, he'll be at the 'House of Lords,' or picking a broiled bone at 'Nosey M'Keown's'—*One*, dancing at the 'Free-and-easy,' or singing in 'The Hole-in-the-Wall'—*Two*, we shall find him on the ramble—*Three*, we'll drop into St. Andrew's watch-house; and after that, for he's not to say a late sitter-up, we'll be pretty sure of catching him in bed taking his snooze at the 'Cole-Hole,' in Essex-street."

I thought of Father Roger: Kit Costello himself could not match the Devil in the multiplicity of his unholy avocations.

We found Miss Letitia "at home," and were shown by an elderly assistant into a parlour behind the shop where the lady was seated at a table covered with the shreds and patches of millinery litter. My introduction as Jack the Devil's kinsman procured me a most gracious reception: indeed, Miss Lightbody was pleased to compliment my appearance, which she compared with a portrait of Master Jack which ornamented her chimney-piece, and which she averred might pass for a likeness of myself. Whether my late *escapade* at country-quarters was too vivid in my recollection, and made me look with suspicion upon strangers, certainly I thought my cousin's description of this "ornament of her sex" rather overdrawn. She was a fine creature, but she "looked every inch" a mantua-maker. The style of her dress was much too florid for my fancy—and she exhibited an assortment of jewellery in rings, bracelets, and

brooches, that was far too exuberant for a fastidious taste, and did not add "to that majesty of virtue," of which article, according to Jack's epistles, she possessed a very extensive stock.

From this lady, O'Donel ascertained that the object of our researches had gone to keep an appointment at a coffee-house. Thither my guide piloted me, and there we discovered Jack the Devil in close conclave with a fashionable young man, who my companion informed me was assistant-surgeon of the 4th Dragoon Guards.

So occupied were my cousin and his friend with their business, that we established ourselves, without being noticed, in the very next box to that in which they had ensconced themselves; and as we were only separated by a slight curtain, every syllable they spoke was overheard distinctly, and O'Donel winked, and signified that we should listen to their *tête-à-tête*.

"We shall be rusticated to a moral," said my relative with the evil surname. "The *skip* would swear an alibi, but they won't believe his oath. They know we had that infernal cockle-party; and there was, unfortunately, nobody sufficiently drunk for mischief but ourselves, except devils of good character—men like Dozey Blake, who creep quietly to bed when they can sit upon their chairs no longer."—"Well, I think," said the surgeon, "a sick certificate will do; but the disease?"—"Consumption," said Jack the Devil, "I had a fourth cousin that died of it."—"It won't do," said his counsellor; "they will expect you to drink milk, eat fish, and wear flannel."—"D—n fish and flannel!" replied the invalid. "What do you think of blood to the head?"—"Won't answer," was the reply; "they would put you on the muzzle, interdict port, and prohibit fox-hunting. Come, I have it; you have overgrown your strength, require country air, gentle exercise, and a generous diet. Could you manage a short cough?" The doctor hemmed—the patient imitated it.—"Very good: try again—excellent; I have seen a man in phthisis that could not cough as well. What name shall I sign; are you particular about your physician?"—"Not very;" returned Jack the Devil; "the surgeon-general bears a great name in Connaught."—"No better authority need be," said he of the Dragoons; "so here you go, honest Philip Crampton. Stop, I'll just add that you go down by easy stages, and are to avoid damp sheets and mental exertion, take exercise on horseback, etc. And now, where shall we toddle to? It is too late for the play, and too early for the Hole-in-the-Wall."—"Why, I promised, if possible, to sup with Letitia: so come along with me. I must, you know, sleep in College, to go like a regular man before the Board to-morrow. I'll just call at Hynes', and tell him to send in plovers and a grilled bone."

But our appearance changed these arrangements. Jack embraced me with delight; we all adjourned to the "Hibernian," supped merrily, and separated before midnight, as became a reformed militia-man and a sober student.

Next day Jack, with "Mad Hamilton" and a couple of north-country candidates for holy orders, were honoured by the provost and senior fellows with a private interview, and then and there obtained a full permission to visit their respective relatives for a period of twelve calendar months.

We parted that evening, I to embark for Holyhead, and Jack to convey his sick certificate to Galway, and try how far native air would benefit an enfeebled constitution. Indeed it was marvellous with what apparent strength of lungs the patient cursed a passenger out of the box seat—but in consumptive cases symptoms are wonderfully deceptive.

CHAPTER VI.

DRURY-LANE.—THE RAINBOW.

"A mighty mass of brick, and stone, and shipping,
Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
In sight, then lost amidst the forestry
Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping
On tiptoe, through their sea-coal canopy:
A huge, dun cupola like foolscap crown
On a fool's head—and there is London town!"

Don Juan.

"Fire and faggots, sir, if you are not Lord Foppington, who the devil are you?

Trip to Scarborough.

It was a lovely evening in the latter end of April, when I was set down from a Shrewsbury coach, at Hatchett's, in Piccadilly. Now, indeed, I was fairly launched upon the world; landed in the metropolis of Britain, master of my own actions, with a full purse, a light heart, the benefit of a recent *escapade*, and of Aylmer's example. True, my time was limited to a few days, and in that brief space a military outfit must be completed. I did not dally; discussed my dinner "in double quick;" set off to visit tailors and boot-makers, to whom I had been especially recommended; and having given necessary directions to these important functionaries, I called a coach, and was driven to Drury Lane Theatre.

I felt like a greyhound in a leash, dying to slip the couple, see life in London, and "run riot" for the few short days allowed me. But I looked suspiciously around; Aylmer was before my eyes; here I was, and *here* he had been ruined. Forewarned by his experience, I determined to steer a clear course amid the dangers and temptations of the modern Babylon. Against the purse, rather than the person, hostile demonstrations were to be apprehended; and I therefore limited the contents of my pocket to a small sum for sights and coach-hire, with a ten-pound note as a "*corps de reserve*," should any exigency require a fresh supply.

Hackneyed as I am now in London spectacles, the night on which I entered the undress circle of Drury Lane will never pass from my memory.

The second act of a very splendid melodrame had commenced. The matchless singing of Braham and Stephens, then in their zenith; the scenic beauty of the stage; the action of the pantomime; the splendour of the processions; the dancing of the *corps de ballet*—were to me perfectly fascinating; and till the curtain fell, I was wrapt in wonder and delight, and never took my eyes from the business of the drama for a moment. Nor with the conclusion of the play did my astonishment terminate; the house was fashionably crowded, and the dress-circle presented a blaze of beauty—a galaxy of "sparkling eyes," on which I thought I could have gazed for ever!

"You are a stranger to the London stage," said a gentleman, to whom during the course of the performance I had frequently applied for information, which with great politeness he supplied.—"I am not only to the stage, but to the town, for I arrived from Ireland but this evening."

"Indeed!" replied the stranger; "is not this piece most intcresting? It is one of the most delightful dramas I ever witnessed. The scenery so beautiful, the illusion so perfect, that it looks reality. If to me, to whom the stage for years has been familiar, it appears so, how much more forcibly must it strike one who for the first time has entered a London theatre?"

Of course, I could not but express my admiration warmly.

"You have much to see in this mighty capital," continued the stranger; "and at your years, young gentleman, objects of curiosity are sought after with avidity. You have, no doubt, some cicerone, some friend, to use the common *parlance* of the world, 'to show the lions.'"—"No, sir," I replied, "I am alone in the metropolis. My visit is a hurried one, for in three days I leave London for the Continent, to join my regiment at Brussels."

"Then will you pardon me?" said my companion, "I am about to take a liberty; it is, however, kindly meant, and I trust it will be as kindly received. Let me entreat you to be cautious; look on every woman with distrust, on every stranger with suspicion. Recollect the myriad of dangers to which youth, in this overgrown city, is exposed. All that can excite the fancy and the passions will be lavishly presented. Vice and villany here are masked under the most flattering appearances; knavery assumes the garb of fashion; and, believe me, much experience, and far more prudence and self-control than fall commonly to the lot of one so young, will be required to protect you from the dangerous and besetting allurements of this splendid and most profligate metropolis."

I felt the kindness of the unknown. He spoke with the warmth of a parent, the wisdom of a philosopher—and his words were the very echo of Aylmer's parting admonition. I looked at the stranger; he was scarcely past the meridian of life, plain and grave, but gentlemanly in his dress. He might, from external appearances, have been a parson, a physician, a professor. My guess was wrong; before we parted he obliged me with his card, and on it was engraven, "Lieut-colonel Edwards, 4th Dragoon Guards, 8, Portman-square."

Need I say that I expressed my gratitude to the gallant colonel warmly? I told him, however, that I had been duly prepared for a *début* upon town; mentioned my friend Aylmer, and assured him that his advice was treasured, and his misfortunes had left a permanent impression on my memory.

"You were indeed fortunate, my young friend, in coming here fortified with good counsel, and better still, a firm resolution to profit by it. But the bell rings, and now for the farce."

During the remainder of the entertainment, I felt how particularly fortunate I had been in making the acquaintance I had done. The colonel knew everything and everybody; he was a moralist; but he was a man of the world; pointed out peers and peeresses in the private boxes, and Jews, bankers, and stock-brokers in the dress-circle; showed me the performers, and favoured me with their biographies; named the chief actresses, and obliged me with a list of their keepers, past and present: in truth, as Ophelia says, "he was good as a chorus."

The curtain dropped. The colonel apologized for not bringing me home, but his lady was an invalid; and, though it was not "his wont," he hinted that we might have some supper at a tavern. The proposition was delightful; I willingly consented, and we left the theatre arm-in-arm. My mentor proposed a quiet house in Covent Garden. Off we set; and when under the piazzas encountered two gentlemen, who recognized my gallant friend.

"Ha! Bill! How goes it, my tight 'un? Anything alive, old boy?"—"What a rattle you are, Jack!—Friend of mine—Mr. Blake, 95th—Lord John Russell, Sir Francis Burdett;" and in due form, I, a poor lieutenant of Rifles, was presented to these specimens of the English aristocracy.

"Will you join us?" said Colonel Edwards; "we are going to have an oyster or broiled bone quietly at 'The Rainbow.'"—"'The Rainbow' be d——?" said Lord John: "come, go it, Bill; I say 'The Finish?'"

But my companion sturdily dissented. "No, my lord. This gentleman," pointing to me, "has never been in London till this evening, and I will never consent to introduce him to a place where the most profligate of both sexes congregate."

"Now, away with this gammon?" rejoined the baronet; "I hate 'The Rainbow?' Come, toddle to the Saloon; that's a slap-up thing! and we'll look in for an hour."

But the colonel was immovable; and Lord John and his companion good-naturedly consented to yield for once, and promised to rejoin us without delay.

There was a *brusquerie* in the manners of both the colonel's friends—a total absence of everything aristocratic, that astounded me. That men of high family should use language decidedly vulgar, and partially unintelligible, was astonishing. Sir Francis was a married man—none in Britain stood higher in public estimation; and would he venture to figure at "The Finish?" I was certainly surprised, and I expressed it to the colonel; of course, with due caution.

He sighed heavily. "Indeed, my young friend, your remarks are just and natural. In the upper classes of society, a consciousness of high station, and the prevailing fashion of the day, have produced an ease of manner bordering upon vulgarity. The coach-box is tenanted by the owner, while the driver sits within. Boxers are the familiar favourites of the nobility. The ring, the stable, and the race-course are the only schools now; and even senators affect the slang of a society, that it is surprising by what contingency they could have ever known. But here we are;" and as he spoke, we entered a very unpretending coffee-room, and seated ourselves in the most retired box, while the colonel pulled the bell, and ordered supper directly.

"My friends," said the polite commander, "will be here immediately, and I must give you a hint, which I know you will excuse. Persons like Sir Francis and Lord John, when on rambles

like the present, sink their titles. They fancy they are unknown;" and the colonel smiled at the absurdity; but we must gratify this folly, and address them simply by their surnames. We will fall into their humour; although, between you and me, the waiter will certainly detect them, and, before we part, penetrate their incognito; ay, and know them as well as you or I."

Almost immediately the friends of Colonel Edwards joined us. I looked at Lord John. He was a common-place sort of personage, in no way remarkable, but for an immense display of rings, chains, and brooches. "Ay," thought I, "there is the overweening wealth of the English nobility. Still something shows the man." I turned to Sir Francis, and he indeed surprised me. He was ungraceful, yeoman-looking. I whispered my disappointment touching his friends to the colonel, while our companions were otherwise employed; but he assured me, that nothing was more likely to lead to a wrong notion of men, than to be influenced by mere manner.

Indeed, notwithstanding his kindness to me, I felt that Sir Francis had sunk immeasurably in my estimation; and I lamented that he should bow to fashion's ordinances, and for a moment descend from his high and palmy state to join in vulgar conviviality. Aylmer had torn away much of the tinsel from high life, but for this *exposé* I was unprepared; and, with disgust, I admitted how faithful the picture of my ruined friend had been, when he described the littleness of nobility. Upon Lord John I looked with pity; he was young, just starting into life, and might reform; but, upon my soul! I regarded Sir Francis with feelings bordering on contempt.

Supper ended, the colonel reminded his friends that there was that night a ballot at Brookes's, at which they were expected to be present. Accordingly, a bill was called for, and I, finding my stock of silver almost exhausted, produced my ten-pound note. The colonel was similarly circumstanced; and when the waiter answered the bell, he handed him a bank-note for change, and returned mine, peremptorily declaring that on this occasion he must be paymaster. I remonstrated to no purpose; he obliged me to pocket my purse, and all I could effect was a compromise, by which it was stipulated, that, on the following night, I should accompany the party to Covent Garden Theatre, and play the host afterwards if I pleased.

A coach was called; we embarked; I was set down at Hatchett's, and my companions proceeded to their club.

Here I was, safe and sound in purse and person, my first night in London over! Was I not, indeed, a fortunate fellow, to form so desirable an acquaintance as Colonel Edwards? I had promised to dine with him next day; and he had assured me that he would call early at Hatchett's, and drive me in his curricle to Greenwood and Cox's. I went to bed; slept soundly; dreamed of dukes, duchesses, countesses, and colonels. There was but one alloy to my happiness, and that was, that my visit was so limited.

I had just finished breakfast and a hasty perusal of the morning papers, when some trifling articles that I had purchased on the preceding evening at a linen-draper's shop in Bond-street, were sent home. I called the waiter, asked him for change to pay the messenger, and handed him my ten-pound note. He looked at it, and then, as I thought, very suspiciously at me.

"Why, this is quite a new one," said he.

"A what?"—"A new one, sir."

"New or old, I presume it's a good one."—"One of the best of the kind I ever saw," replied the waiter.

"Its kind! why, is it not the Bank of England?"—"No, sir; it's the Bank of Elegance," quoth the attendant.

"Bank of the Devil! What do you mean?"

The waiter bowed, and handed me the note. It was, indeed, what is termed a flash one, being the undertaking of a wig-maker in Bishopsgate-street "to cut hair against any man living, or pay bearer, on demand, at the Bank of Elegance, Fifty Pounds." Dark doubts crossed my mind—Edwards was a swindler, and had exchanged this for my ten-pound note when settling the supper-bill at the Rainbow. At that moment a twopenny-post letter arrived; it was addressed to me by the gallant colonel, and put the point at rest.

"My dear Blake,

"You have very probably discovered before now that you are one of the greatest asses in existence."—Very true, but not very flattering.—"Certainly, your friend Aylmer may be proud of his pupil."—I groaned.—"Even my warnings were unheeded, and you let me do you out of ten pounds, and palm upon you, for a couple of the *noblesse*, two as vulgar scoundrels as ever prigged a pocket handkerchief. You are one of the softest young gentlemen I have had the honour of cleaning out for a long time; therefore, as your stay is limited, don't wait for me to introduce you to Craig's Court; for if you stop at Hatchett's till my curricle arrives, you had better replenish your purse, and obtain an extended leave of absence.

"I beg you not to *debit* me with your gloves, knife, and handkerchief."—Gone they were indeed.—"Lord John grabbed them. You will be sorry to learn that the poor baronet is in quod: he is very unlucky, as it is scarcely a fortnight since he returned from transportation. He made an awkward effort at a watch, and is now under the screw, and I fear, will go for change of air to Brixton.

"Adieu, my friend. Mention me to Mr. Aylmer when you write to him; and if you profit by my precepts, you will have laid out ten pounds to excellent advantage. Although I could accommodate you with a score of names, I think last night's will do as well as any.

"Thine, my dear Blake, very affectionately,

"William Edwards,

"*Lieut-Col. 4th Dragoon Guards.*"

"P.S.—Was it Portman or Berkeley Square where my town-residence was? Faith, I forget which; but I leave the choice to you. Mrs. E. desires her regards.—W. E."

"*Tuesday morning*, 8 *o'clock*."

"To John Blake, Esq., 95th Rifles,
Hatchett's Hotel, Piccadilly."

I folded the colonel's epistle, and laid it aside most carefully; unlocked my portfolio, and gave the waiter a bank-note; and having called a coach, drove off to call upon Greenwood and Cox.

CHAPTER VII.

A PROMISED HEIR.—CALL AT BAKER STREET.—DEPARTURE.

"*Sir Anthony.*—You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop;—you must tell her 'tis Jack's way—tell her 'tis all our ways—it runs in the blood of the family! Come away, Jack, ha, ha, ha! Mrs. Malaprop—a young villain!

Mrs. M.—Oh, Sir Anthony!—Oh, fie, captain!"

The Rivals.

I REACHED Craig's Court as safely, though not so stylishly, as if I had come in the colonel's curricle; despatched my business, and found myself—no bad thing for a second lieutenant—in strong credit with the agents. Sundry letters were handed to me, and among others, a most voluminous epistle from my uncle Manus. Now, Manus Blake was but an indifferent penman, and to him a letter was a labour. His correspondence rarely exceeded two or three despatches within a twelvemonth, and therefore an epistle from him must be momentous. I ordered the coachman to drive me back to Hatchett's, that there I might have full leisure to peruse this important document.

"Castle Blake, April, 1815.

"DEAR JACK,

"Since you sailed for England, I have received a letter from your grandfather, in reply to one of mine, relative to your poor mother's fortune. I thought, now that you have entered into a profession, it was full time to inquire what disposition had been made of five thousand pounds which I understood to have been a legacy from an aunt to my late sister-in-law, and over which Mr. Harrison had no control. Hitherto I forebore to make inquiries, lest it might be imagined that I wished to appropriate any part of your scanty patrimony to your past or present necessities. Mr. H. informs me, and in more polite terms than I expected from him, that you were made a ward of Chancery, and the money has been accumulating for your benefit. This is all right. As your grandfather is at present in London, although he expressed no wish to see you in his letter, I would recommend you to call; maybe the Lord would soften his heart, and make him do justice to one that never injured him, and that's yourself. He lives at No. 43, Upper Barker or Baker-street.

"You will expect, no doubt, to hear the news of the neighbourhood. Mrs. Donovan has married a colonel somebody, and, we suspect, made but a poor hand of it—(more of that to her! say I)—for they seem to be hard-up for money, or they would never rack the tenants as they're doing.

"Father Roger has got the parish of Ballyboffin. The people were sadly neglected by the old priest, who was bedridden for years. Father Roger has turned over a new leaf with them, and the first Sunday he cursed them out of the face, with bell, book, and candle, to show them that they must look to their souls in future.

"Tony, poor man! broke his leg last Tuesday, by a fall from the switch-tailed mare. It was a great blessing, when he was to break a bone, that it happened the end of the season.

"A set of Ballybooley boys, the other night, took off Sibby M'Clintock, the schoolmaster's daughter. There is a great hullybaloo in consequence, but no tidings of her yet. I'm glad she's gone, for your cousin Jack was eternally dropping in. It's not right to put temptation in a young man's way; and as he's in delicate health, his mother won't allow him to be contradicted in anything.

"I fear he will be obliged to give up the bar entirely, which is a great pity, for he would have cut a figure. He over-read himself so much in college, that the sight of a Latin book gives him a head-ache. He had a nasty short cough when he came down, but it is leaving him fast; and he tallied the fox we found in Carrintubber, last Friday, as clear as a bell: his lungs, therefore, are not affected, which is a great comfort, although the surgeon-general was a little apprehensive about them at one time.

"Denis Corcoran burned powder for the first time, last week, in a field near Ballinasloe. It is allowed on all hands that he behaved prettily, and hit his man the second shot. One is interested naturally for a friend's child, and, indeed I always thought that Denis was a promising boy.

"Your aunt is pretty well, and preparing for the jubilee.* She misses Father Roger much, for he was of great service to her in private. He is looking out for a smart coadjutor to serve the parish; and then he will return as usual, to manage your aunt's concerns in Castle Blake.

"Poor Darby Moran—and a decent boy he was—him you may remember that they called 'Darby Dhu' (black), was hanged last Monday for shooting at a peeler.† It was hard enough upon him, as he only lamed the fellow for life. As he was a tenant's son, your aunt, out of respect, sent the maids upon the jaunting-car to attend the execution. He died real game, and pleased the priest greatly in religion before he came out upon the drop. We gave him a good wake, and a fine funeral.

"Dr. Stringer was fired at, in mistake, when leaving Mount Kirwan after dinner: they shot his horse dead; and when they discovered that he was the wrong man, made him an ample apology. They took him, in the dark, for Parson Milligan, as he rode a grey cob, and had on a black cotamore.‡

"Your aunt is very uneasy at your being ordered abroad, and fears some accident will happen, as she has had bad dreams. Indeed, my dear Jack, you must look sharp. Foreign parts, they say, are dangerous. I wish to God you were in a quiet safe country like Galway; but we can't have everything as we want it.

"I have written this post to my old friend Mortimer, and desired him to give you a case of his best pistols, and send the bill to me. I would recommend you to have them saw-handled, with a finger-crook upon the trigger-guard, for it steadies the hand wonderfully. Be sure you choose a small bore and a weighty barrel. I would have sent you my own, but your cousin is growing up. He will soon be on the grand jury, and some devil will be apt to plaster a quarrel on him; or somebody might tramp on my own corns; so it is better for us to keep the tools we are accustomed to.

* A religious festival held in Ireland at stated times, for making of marriages and remission of sins.

† *Anglicé*, a policeman. ‡ *Anglicé*, a great-coat.

"Father Roger is breaking fast, and you'll be sorry to hear it. You remember what a head he had. Two bottles of port now make him talk thick, and the third smothers him totally. More's the pity! a better Christian never cursed a flock; and, as a companion—one might drink with him in the dark, and ask no questions!

"Denis O'Brien sends his blessing, and desires me to say that he is rearing two pups of the tanned setter. And with mine, your aunt's, and your cousin's love, believe me,

"Dear Jack,

"Ever your affectionate uncle,

"MANUS BLAKE."

"P.S.—A letter by some mistake came here, directed to you, from a Miss Lightbody of Dublin; and, unfortunately, it fell into your aunt's hands. The best of the sex are curious, and she read it every word. Indeed, poor woman! she's over-religious, and, of course, was greatly distressed. I told her, young men would be young men to the end of the chapter. You know, Jack, I am not too tight-laced, but the less you have to do with such gentlewomen the better. It appears by her account that I am likely to become a grand-uncle. Well, it can't be helped; and you may make your mind easy, for your little one shall be protected. I directed your cousin Jack to write to the lady: it will come better from him, and I'll pretend to know nothing of the thing. But take my advice, and avoid such scrapes in future. Jack tells me he thinks he saw her once, and that she is very good-looking. Don't take any notice of this when writing to your aunt, for she is to know nothing of the business.

"It seems also, by Miss Lightbody's epistle, that they have nicknamed you 'Jack the Devil.' I suspect this appellation was earned by many a wild prank. My Jack, it would appear, was termed *Sober-sides;* but, as I tell his mother, had his health been as good as yours, he might have been as wild as yourself. "Yours, M.B."

"N.B.—As you may be out of the country, if it is a boy, I'll have it called after your poor father; but if a girl, I think it should be named after your aunt. She'll expect the compliment; and, indeed, from her affection towards you, she deserves it."

Was there ever such consummate assurance as my worthy cousin's? To transfer to me not only his flattering *sobriquet,* but the honours of paternity that awaited him! And yet, I could not but laugh at the simplicity of my uncle, whom it was evident that Jack had duped egregiously. I felt half inclined to undeceive him. If it answered no other purpose, it might alter the patronymic of the expected heir. But, as my aunt was preparing for the jubilee, a discovery of Jack's iniquities might interrupt the holy tranquillity of her mind, so very requisite at this important period, when sins were lopped off by the dozen, and an immunity granted to all good Catholics to commence a new score.

Young as I was, I saw the necessity of attending to my uncle's advice, and calling upon my grandfather. I prepared for the interview, and drove off to Baker Street. The coach stopped at the right number; and for once in his life, Manus Blake was correct in figures. The coachman knocked, the door opened, the steps fell, I jumped from the vehicle, and to a very pretty-looking woman verging upon the middle-age, I handed my card. She read it, placed her hands across her eyes, examined my features for a moment, and then, with a half scream, closed the hall-door, and requested me to follow her. She led the way into a front drawing-room, very expensively furnished, and, by the presence of a harp, piano, and guitar, bearing evidence of female occupation.

"Gracious God! how like his father!" was her first remark; "I wish, boy, you had been liker your mother; it would have served you better."

I was astonished.

"Why did you not call yesterday?" she continued; "your grandfather and Miss Emily left town this morning, on a short excursion; and from the old gentleman's declining health, God knows how soon he may go off!—Ay, the same eyes, same hair, same look, and I fear, the same recklessness—all—all like his father. You must follow them, sir. They will reach Brighton on Monday; there you must meet them."

I stared at her. "You seem to know me, and to have known my parents."

"Yes," she replied, "I knew and loved them—I mean your mother. Alas! I was the chief cause of that disastrous union; for I assisted your gallant but imprudent father to carry off Miss Harrison. Is there a servant of the colonel's living? his name O'Brien?"—"Denis O'Brien is stout and hearty."

"Does he ever speak of his master?" said the female.—"Eternally," I answered.

"Does he ever mention the innkeeper's daughter? she who assisted in that wild adventure. Names he a person called Phœbe?"—"Indeed he does: or as he terms it, '*Phaybay.*'"

She laughed. "Ay, just so; I think now I listen to his 'Phaybay, jewel.' And what do they call you? Cæsar, I suppose."—"No, I am unfortunately called after my grandfather—John."

"Unfortunately! I am glad of it," she said; "my heart bounded when you alighted from the coach; and, but your years are fewer, I could have fancied it was the poor colonel on the well-remembered night he stopped at the Red Lion in Stainsbury. You will go to Brighton, won't you?"—"Impossible! I leave town to-morrow; my regiment is in the Netherlands, and my leave expired."

"Alas! like your father in everything! And you are a soldier, too. How determined fortune seems to part you from your natural protector! You must write to Mr. Harrison, however. At times his heart softens when he thinks of Miss Ellen's hapless fate. There is her portrait," and she pointed to a half-length painting covered with a silken curtain; "it is kept veiled as you see: but, in secret, your grandfather draws the silk aside, and looks at it for hours. I have ascertained this frequently."

As she spoke, she jumped upon a chair, and uncovered my mother's portrait. It was the likeness of a beautiful girl in the very dawning of womanhood. I gazed on it with deep interest. There was uncommon loveliness in the features, whose character was a softness touching upon melancholy. I became sensibly affected; tears stole down my cheeks; I heard sobs beside me, and on turning round saw Phœbe weeping bitterly. I took her hand and placed her on the

sofa. "Come, Phœbe, this is foolish in us both; tell me who Miss Emily is?"

My mother's confidant wiped away her tears with the corner of her apron.

"And do you ask this question? Are you so ignorant of your grandfather as not to know that she is his adopted child, his intended heiress? But, as all correspondence has ceased for years, I suppose you are a stranger to all this. Well, I need not tell you how severely your mother's marriage wounded her father's pride, and how bitterly he resented it. While writhing under what he called a child's desertion, chance made him acquainted with a very amiable lady of good family in Gloucestershire. He addressed, and married her; in due time she gave promise of an heir, and her husband was overjoyed. But this happiness was brief; news of the tragic fate of Colonel Blake, and the untimely death of his lovely wife, stung Mr. Harrison to the soul. In secret, he felt his own cruelty to the deceased, and longed for some opening that would allow him to offer his protection to the orphan grandchild. At last he conquered his own pride, and wrote to your uncle; and instead of a pacific reply, received a letter offensive in its language, and ending with a challenge!"

I started—"Was ever such madness? a challenge!"—"Yes, indeed: madness you may well call it. Of course, with that letter all communication between the parties ceased.

"Meanwhile Mrs. Harrison's accouchement was approaching, and a house was engaged in town, that she might be placed under the immediate care of the first physicians. The hour came—her husband's hopes were blasted—she died in giving birth to a still-born babe!

"The deceased lady had an only sister, who had lost her husband, a captain in the navy, a few months before. As Mrs. Clifden's confinement drew near, Mrs. Harrison, who was deeply attached to her widowed sister, invited her to Stainsbury Park. There she gave birth to a girl, but never herself recovered. It was believed that this circumstance had preyed upon Mrs. Harrison heavily, and in a great degree produced her death. She thought and spoke of Mrs. Clifden incessantly; adopted her child—and, when dying, confided it to your grandfather's protection, after receiving a solemn assurance that he would be a parent to the orphan. That promise Mr. Harrison rigidly fulfilled. The child was brought home—he watched her from the cradle—gradually he grew more and more attached to the deserted infant, and the little Emily became to him a cherished pledge—a darling daughter. She is now nearly sixteen, beautiful as innocent. But you shall judge for yourself;" and Phœbe led me to the mantle-piece, over which a miniature of Miss Clifden was suspended. It was the likeness of a very lovely girl; the expression of the countenance combining sweetness with intelligence.

"Indeed, Phœbe," I said, "this is a charming picture. Has not the artist flattered Miss Clifden?"—"Far from it. More beautiful faces than hers I have certainly seen, but I never saw one that interests so much. That miniature was painted when Miss Emily was a year younger; she is of course more womanly now, but still the likeness is most striking."

"And is this fair girl as accomplished as she is pretty, Phœbe?"—"Her teachers say so," she replied. "These are her drawings:" and she opened a portfolio, containing many very elegant pencil sketches. "She plays delightfully, and she has been taught to dance by the first artist at the Opera. But this accomplishment she has never practised but with her master; for Mr. Harrison's health and habits preclude her from entering into society, even were she old enough to go out. In truth, there is not a girl in England more secluded."

"I wish I had seen her."—"I wish sincerely that you had," said Phœbe. "But where would be the advantage? yet, when you are some years older, I would give this hand to see you and Miss Emily married."

I laughed. "Why Phœbe, I thought you had had enough of match-making."—"Heighho! I have been an unlucky agent to others, and most unfortunate in my own union," and she pointed to a wedding and a mourning ring upon her finger.

"Then you have been married, Phœbe?"

"Yes," she replied, "I suppose it was the evil influence of example; for soon after your father eloped with Miss Harrison, I took it into my head to run away with a sergeant of dragoons. He was a handsome, good-humoured fellow, and I an only child. My mother purchased his discharge—in due time we were forgiven and brought home—and in three years, Jenkins, by the death of my parents, became owner of the inn. His habits were indolent and jovial; and when all control was removed, they unfortunately became dissipated. I strove to reclaim him, and kept our property together pretty well, until, in an hour of inebriety, he was mad enough to become security for an insolvent tradesman; and before I even apprehended danger, we were utterly ruined, and the earnings of my father's life swept away to discharge the debts of a rogue. He saw his folly when too late to remedy it, and died, poor fellow! a broken-hearted man. I, being fortunately without incumbrance, was taken into Mr. Harrison's household. There I have remained since, and there I am likely to continue."

"No," said I, "not if your quondam admirer Mr. O'Brien knew that his 'Phaybay darlin" was disengaged."

She smiled and rallied me again about Miss Clifden. "Well, Phœbe, when the wars are over, I will come here and make my suit. Will you assist me?"—"Indeed I will," she replied with a smile.

"Give me, then, that picture, that I may know my dulcinea, should I by any chance meet her."

She shook her head. "I dare not. But come, you shall have a token of my pretty mistress;" and, opening a pocket-book, she gave me a ringlet of auburn hair.

"I got it from Miss Emily the night before she left, and little did she know that I should so soon transfer her favour to another. But she speaks of you often, calls you cousin, and wonders if you are as handsome as I describe the poor colonel to have been."

"Well, well, Phœbe, you will make a favourable report. I leave town in the mail to-morrow evening for embarkation, but I'll visit you in the forenoon."

"You will find me at home; though, faith,

young gentleman, I risk my reputation by admitting so gay a gallant in the absence of the family:" and, with a woman's vanity, she arranged a stray side-curl in the chimney-glass. When parting in the hall, of course I kissed my mother's confidant. "Now, deuce take you for a saucy boy. But it is hard to blame him; the fault is a family one. His poor father never commenced or concluded a conversation without committing a similar impertinence!"

I made my peace next day with Phœbe; and some small memorials of my mother that I forced her to accept, with a few trifles from myself, cemented our friendship. We parted — she in tears, and I more affected than I shall now acknowledge; for Phœbe appeared the only connecting link remaining between my lamented parents and myself.

On the third evening I left London, had a fine passage to Ostend, and reached head-quarters at Brussels on the 23rd of April.

I need only say that the probationary course of drill was speedily got over; letters of introduction procured me attention from the commanding officers, and I made some very desirable private acquaintances in my own corps. I took lessons in French and fencing—purchased a horse —rode about the city and immediate neighbourhood—found Brussels a delightful residence for a young soldier—and while days rose big with the fate of empires, mine slipped lightly away; and the middle of June found me entirely engrossed in learning the rudiments of love, war, and the German flute.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUATRE-BRAS AND WATERLOO.

"Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms,—the day
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent,
The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heap'd and pent,
Rider and horse, — friend, foe, — in one red burial blent."

Childe Harold.

On Thursday, the 15th of June, the sun rose gaily on fair Brussels. Without, war was on the wing—within, there was joy and festivity; and yet, strange contrast! some were preparing for the field, while others were dressing for the ball-room. Courier after courier brought vague reports of hostile demonstrations on the frontier. Blucher was in constant communication with Wellington, and all were ready for marching at a moment's notice so soon as Napoleon developed his plans sufficiently, to show us upon what point the storm of battle would descend.

In the evening, the Prince of Orange reached the gay city, and rode into the Duke's court-yard, and he bore certain tidings of Bonaparte's advance. The Prussian general, Muffling, soon after confirmed the news; and Picton, who had but that morning arrived from England, remained with his military colleagues discussing over their wine at the Duke's table the probable opening of a campaign, whose close, short as it was, he was not fated to witness.

Night came—

"And Belgium's capital had gather'd there,
Her beauty and her chivalry."

Surrounded by a brilliant circle at the Duchess of Richmond's ball, Wellington received a second despatch from Blucher. The moment for action was come, and the intelligence was decisive. Napoleon had crossed the Sambre in force, and was marching rapidly on Charleroi and Fleurus.

While reading the marshal's communication, the English commander became wholly absorbed in thought, and his air was grave and contemplative. As if forgetful that he was in a crowded room, he muttered some sentences in which Blucher's name was audible. Then, with characteristic rapidity, his resolution was formed, his orders quietly issued to his staff, and again he joined the gay group with whom he had been engaged when the momentous intelligence of Bonaparte's advance was delivered.

While orders were hastily despatched, directing the British brigades to break up from their respective cantonments, and advance by rapid marches upon Nivelles, the *corps-d'armée* in Brussels was ordered to march by the Wood of Soignes, upon the great road to Charleroi. Thus it was intended that the whole force should unite as it approximated to the scene of action, while the Belgian capital should be covered from any effort of Napoleon, and the communication with the Prussians maintained, by the English left forming a junction with Blucher's right.

It was a moment of painful and engrossing interest, when the "turn out" of the bugle was returned by the rolling of the "beat to arms." The great city was buried in repose. The soldier was sleeping in his quarters—the burgher dreaming of to-morrow's business—while in that gay crowd where he who was to direct the storm of war still lingered, "an hundred hearts beat happily," that before another sun would set, were doomed to mourn over friendships dissolved by death, and fairy visions of love's formation, alas! too bright and beautiful to be realized.

I was asleep—but the excitement and uncertainty of the last evening had rendered mine but uneasy slumbers, and I was teased with irritating dreams. One while, I was about to fight O'Moore across the mess-table—at another, mother Daly upbraided me with broken vows, and brandished in her hand an attorney's letter, in which the pains and penalties of breach of promise were awfully denounced. Again, with the inconsistency of a dreamer, I found myself before the Old Bailey, to witness the execution of my friend Sir Francis for street robbery; and, while waiting for the baronet's last appearance upon any stage, I felt a pluck at my watch-chain, and detected Lord John in the very act of borrowing my repeater. I was lustily shouting for an officer, when the sharp and sustained rattle of a brass drum beneath my window dispelled these "troublous dreams." I jumped out of bed, and commenced collecting my habiliments, just as the piper-major of the Seventy-ninth struck up "a gathering" that would have started the seven sleepers, and convulsed any one but an admirer of Paganini.

Brussels was speedily in an uproar—soldiers hurried to their alarm-posts, and citizens peeped from their windows, or issued from the house to

ascertain the causes of this general commotion. The streets were crowded to excess, as from every quarter of the city, cavalry, artillery, and field equipages collected. The whole of the divisions were speedily ready for marching, and the infantry defiling by regiments had already taken the road through the Wood of Soignes. By seven all was over ; the troops were gone—the streets deserted—for those who four hours before were figuring at the ball, were now advancing upon Quatre-Bras, directed by that harbinger of blood, "the cannon's opening roar."

As ours was a light, consequently it was a leading regiment. Every mile brought us nearer to the conflict. The distant and hollow booming of the guns changed to a lively cannonade, intermingled with a sharp and continued roll of musketry. Other tokens of "a foughten field" were not wanting ; tumbrils and country-carts filled with wounded men passed us in quick succession, while many a poor fellow was stretched upon the road, where he had expired in a vain effort to seek assistance in the rear.

We had marched more than twenty miles before we reached Quatre-Bras, where the Prince of Orange had been hotly engaged since morning, and obliged to yield ground he could hold no longer, but every inch of which he had most gallantly contested. The battle was raging. To the right, the left, and before us, cannon and musketry were heard. There was small time for observation, for as they came up each regiment deployed and took its ground. Nor was this easily done ; favoured by the immense rye-crop, the French cavalry rushed on them before they formed. In some instances the Lancers charged with partial success—but generally they received a shattering volley that sent them to the right about, or found the British in square, which, while its ridge of steel was impassable to every effort, threw in volley after volley so close and murderous, that, before its ceaseless storm, man and horse went down in hundreds.

On the right of our position, the Bois de Bossu had been occupied by a Belgian corps ; but they had been driven in, and the French occupied it in force. This wood was of paramount importance, and it must be recovered—for under its cover, the French could suddenly debouch and seize the Brussels road. The rifles were ordered to retake it, and in a few minutes we were hotly engaged with the French light infantry.

It was a beautiful affair. Where the wood was thick we availed ourselves of the cover, and extending from tree to tree, pressed the Tirailleurs sharply. The rifle did excellent service, and gradually the French lost ground till we reached the extremity of the wood, when we formed, fixed swords, and pushed the enemy fairly across the ravine beyond it. But, once debouched, a storm of grape saluted us ; immediately the cavalry charged ; and we were driven for shelter to the trees. Fresh light troops entered the wood—skirmishing recommenced ; gradually pressed by numbers, we in our turn were forced back, and after a fierce and sanguinary struggle, once more the French light infantry possessed the Bois de Bossu.

At that critical moment, General Maitland and the Guards arrived after a fifteen hours' march, and the Duke ordered them to support us, and attack the wood instantly. Wearied, but with unbroken spirits, on they went. Another affair ensued, and for three hours the Bois de Bossu was furiously contested. At last the French abandoned it altogether—night ended the combat—Ney fell back on Frasnes—and we bivouacked on the ground which we regained with such loss of life. Fatigued and hungry, I threw myself under a tree and slept soundly till morning dawned.

The sun rose gloomily, the rain fell fast, and everything foretold a coming tempest. I made my first and only meal that day on a crust or two of stale bread, with a flask of excellent brandy, which my servant had found in the haversack of a dead voltigeur. It was indeed a fortunate discovery : and I shared it with a brave companion, who, though wounded severely, was too gallant to go to the rear. Most of the brigades had joined us over night, and momentarily we expected battle. But Blucher had fallen back, and a corresponding movement was necessary on the part of Wellington. It was done ; we retired by Genappe ; and after a masterly retreat, marked by some slight affairs of cavalry, we halted on the night of the seventeenth upon the ridge of Waterloo.

The march had been very distressing ; bad weather, execrable roads, and short rations, were discouraging enough after one sanguinary conflict, and preparatory to another and a deadlier one to-morrow. But we were formed of stubborn materials ; the elements themselves could not subdue British resolution, which even amid pain, fatigue, and hunger, proved itself indomitable.

The night continued stormy ; it thundered and lightened, and the rain fell in torrents. With difficulty the fires were lighted, and kept up from the supplies that the neighbouring forest yielded. At last the eighteenth dawned. Gloomily the morning rose ; but with the first light we were busily engaged. The arms were dried—the rations, scanty, and bad, discussed—the positions of regiments marked or corrected, till at eleven the sun shone out ; and soon after, under a storm of artillery, Jerome Bonaparte advanced on Hougoumont, and Waterloo, glorious Waterloo, commenced.

We were pushed forward in front of the fifth division, occasionally fighting in extended order, as we lined the ravine in front of the position, or, when threatened with a charge of cavalry, uniting and forming square, like the rest of the infantry. The regiments comprising Picton's division were stationed in the left centre, behind a broken hedge, which, although it partially masked the position, from its numerous openings allowed sufficient room for cavalry to charge. Some Belgian light troops, posted in front, were driven in about two o'clock, and told that the storm that had been raging on the right of the line, was now about to be directed against the left centre.

We were skirmishing in extended order along the crest of the ravine, between our own troops and the French masses, when a furious cannonade announced the coming tempest, and falling back, we formed on the flank of a Highland regiment. D'Erlon's corps ascended the ridge—his infantry in close column, while the cavalry galloped down the face of the position, or rode in between the squares to discover if any of the British regiments had been shaken by the fire of the artillery. A body of Cuirassiers attacked the Highlanders on

our left. But the square was perfect, and its musketry opened with such sustained precision that the horsemen were forced to recoil. In their retreat they passed us within thirty paces, and we had reserved our fire. Although they rode off at speed, and to clear the face of our squares was but the work of a minute, yet they went down by dozens, and a line of men and horses stretched along the rye, showed that few triggers of the Ninety-fifth had been idly drawn.

While the broken cavalry rode over the ridge, only to form again and renew their desperate efforts, the French masses advanced boldly to the hedge, and at the same moment, "the fighting Fifth," deployed at the other side, came on to meet them, and the muskets of the rival infantry almost touched each other. At that moment Picton gave the word to charge — instantly, Kempt's brigade cleared the fence—Pack's rushed forward to support it—and the French, instead of being assailants, found themselves assailed. They delivered one well-directed volley, and commenced retiring in perfect order. But British blood was roused; the Fifth pressed forward with the bayonet, and the French feebly resisted, fell in hundreds, and a series of murderous combats followed. The infantry were driven across the ridge, and the cavalry who came to their relief, charged in line with the bayonet, and forced over the ravine with prodigious loss. Picton fell while executing this brilliant charge. For an hour this sanguinary conflict raged, till the plateau in front of the position was totally abandoned by the French, who left three thousand bodies on the ground.

A lull succeeded; but it was only till fresh troops could be brought forward. It was five o'clock; the French batteries were reinforced and advanced, and opening a sweeping fire of grape, prepared us for another effort. Again we formed square; but, alas! two hours had diminished it sadly. We had lost all our field officers; the captains were *hors de combat;* and a junior commanded the regiment. The storm of grape continued, and the men fell fast. A regiment of Cuirassiers appeared in front, while a body of red lancers of the guard threatened us in flank and rear. This was a trying moment, and hearts beat fast, but not from fear. Our swords were screwed on, the face of the square corrected, and while shells exploded and shot hailed upon us to cover the advance of the cavalry, the Ninety-fifth remained firm, calm, and determined.

On they came! "fierce as the bursting thunder-cloud:" but they found us ready to receive them. Our front rank presented an unbroken line of glittering sword-blades, while the rear poured over the heads of their kneeling comrades a continued stream of fire, that—for every bullet found its mark—brought the assailants to the earth in dozens. Unable to endure this withering fusilade, at length they turned and went off. Up rose the front rank, and threw in their reserved fire; and that parting volley searched many a back-piece, and sent many a charger across the hill with an empty saddle.

It was then that Wellington and his staff rode up, and his quick eye discovering that most of the officers were fallen, himself gave the word—"Well done, Ninety-fifth! Unfix swords; left face; extend again; and we shall drive these rascals across the hill." No more was wanted; we cheered, broke into skirmishing order, spread over the rising ground, and kept up an independent fire, wherever a group or officer was seen whom a rifle-ball would reach.

We were curiously posted; the crests of the respective hills occupied by the conflicting hosts were considerably higher than the broken ground on which we were extended; and, as the cannonade was furious on either side, the hissing of the "iron shower" that swept but a few feet over us, was anything but agreeable. We lay about one hundred and fifty paces in front of the British position, and commanded a more extensive view of the hostile operations than any of the regiments in line. Wherever the wreaths of dense smoke allowed the eye to penetrate, the field of battle exhibited a scene of boundless devastation. Dismounted guns, and ruined equipages of all descriptions, were strewn everywhere about. The height of the rye generally concealed the carcases of the slain, but other and certain tokens pointed out the many that had already fallen. Troops of horses without riders were careering along the ridge; some with astonishing sagacity remained with their companions, imitated their movements, and accompanied the regiment when it charged, and followed it when retreating; others fed quietly in the valley that lay between the combatants, and, undismayed by the thunder of five hundred cannon, obeying animal instinct, cropped the tall grain, to all appearance as undisturbed as when picketed before the battle commenced.

The sun was descending rapidly, when our attention was directed towards Fischermont by a loud and irregular cannonade. It was evident that fresh troops were coming into action; but whose were they? Grouchy or Blucher had arrived—and which? That was a momentous question. This uncertainty was short; the cannonade upon the left became louder and more continued, and our own batteries were advanced nearer to the ridge, where the British line, for the last half hour, had been gradually converging.

It was evident that a mighty movement was preparing by the enemy; columns were seen forming, and a new and furious effort was about to be made. Three grand attacks, each in itself a battle, had failed—and night and Blucher were approaching.

It was seven o'clock—the Prussians had come up in force, and the French right began to retrograde. The fate of the day was hurrying to its crisis—Napoleon's fortune was "on a die"—and he well knew that by a desperate essay alone he could turn a fight which every moment was becoming less doubtful. The Imperial Guard was therefore formed for attack, and Ney, "the child of victory," ordered to lead it on.

Wellington, also, had marked the crisis; and the English Guards were advanced to the brow of the ridge, formed four deep, and ordered to lie down to avoid the cannonade, until the moment for action came. Vandeleur's and Vivian's brigades of light cavalry were brought from the left to support the intended effort of the centre; while, covered by a storm of artillery, the Imperial Guards mounted the height in close column.

Although the fire of the British batteries mowed them down, at cannister-range, and the converged fusilade of the right wing was "fast and furious," this splendid soldiery undauntedly came on, with the war-cry of "*Vive l'Empereur!*"

They crossed the ridge—and then the household troops of England rose in vengeance, cheered, and rushed forward with the bayonet. The Duke, who had watched the moment, rode up, ordered us to fix swords, and united with the Forty-second, led us on in person. Ours was a flanking movement, while the Guards drove Ney back in front. They pressed the French across the height, while we rushed forward to support them. A tirailleur battalion threw itself across us; but we swept it from our path—our sword-blades met the French bayonets, and on the other flank, in galloped our light cavalry. Sabred and bayoneted on every side, the middle guard became a mob. Some battalions of the Old, gallantly but vainly, endeavoured by forming square, to cover the rout of their companions; but the British charge was irresistible—all went down before it—and a massacre, and not a fight, succeeded.

I had hitherto escaped with but two trifling scratches. Hurried on by the frenzy of the scene, and the hotness of young blood on a "first field," I quickly found myself in the thickest of the *mêlée*, where sabre and bayonet were the only weapons employed. The artillery (our own) had ceased firing—for we were all intermingled, and fighting hand to hand. A grizzled grenadier of the Old Guard, with two orders on his breast, made a full lunge at me, and I felt the bayonet glancing along my ribs. I returned it with a sheer sabre-cut, which brought the veteran to his knees. An Irish guardsman—for he swore awfully in the sweet and euphonious language of "my native land"—beat out his brains with a clubbed musket. I cut down a stray tirailleur pretty cleverly—and next moment was felled to the ground. A dozen English hussars rode over me—a stream of blood obscured my sight—I felt a few knocks like the kicks of a charger—became insensible, and lay among the dead and dying, as the last glint of sunshine faded on the field of battle.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

"The infinities of agony,
Which meet the gaze, whate'er it might regard—
The groan, the roll in dust, the all-white eye
Turn'd back within its socket: these reward
Your rank and file by thousands, while the rest
May win perhaps a riband at the breast.
* * * * * * *
Let not his mode of raising cash seem strange,
Although he fleeced the *dead* of every nation,
For into a prime minister but change
His title, and 'tis nothing but taxation;
But he, more modest, took an humbler range
Of life, and eke an honester vocation."

Don Juan.

WATERLOO was won; the sun set upon a scene of slaughter, and the stillness of death succeeded the roar of battle. The thunder of four hundred cannon—the roll of musketry—the shock of mail-clad horsemen—the Highland slogan—the Irish huzza, were heard no more; and the moon gleamed coldly on a field of death, whose silence was only broken by the groans of the wounded, as they lay in helpless wretchedness beside their dead companions.

While many a sufferer listened to every sound in anxious expectation of relief, a dropping fire was occasionally heard in the direction of Genappe, announcing that the broken army of Napoleon was fiercely followed by its conquerors.

Wearied by the unparalleled exertions of the tremendous day of Waterloo, the British pursuit gradually relaxed, and the light cavalry halted on the road to Quatre-Bras; but the Prussians, less fatigued, continued to harass the flying enemy, and the mingled mass of fugitives were forced from every village where they had attempted to form bivouacks. A barrier was hastily thrown across the entrance of Genappe, to arrest the progress of the yagers and hussars that hung upon the rear of the guard; but it was blown down by a few discharges of a howitzer, and the French were driven from the town. Throughout the disastrous night, not a moment of repose was granted to the terror-stricken multitude. To attempt anything like serious resistance to their pursuers, where all were inextricably confused, was absurd. Officers and soldiers were mobbed together; discipline had ended; none attempted to direct where none were found to obey; and with unrelenting fury the Prussian cavalry sabred the exhausted fugitives, till, after passing Gossilies and Charleroi, the wreck of Napoleon's army found a temporary shelter beneath the walls of Philippeville.

That night, the British bivouac was close to the same ridge which their beaten enemy had occupied on the preceding one; and as I lay upon the ground, I heard at times, and at no great distance from me, the voices of my more fortunate companions who had "escaped from the slaughter," and were roaming over the field in search of plunder. Momentarily, I expected that some friendly straggler would pass by. I must have been for a considerable period insensible, for the place where I fell, although the theatre of the final struggle between the relics of Ney's division and the British Guards and cavalry, was now totally deserted by the living, and cumbered only with the dying and the dead.

I seemed as if awakening from a dream; a difficulty of respiration painfully annoyed me, and I endeavoured to rise; but a weight too mighty to be removed pressed me to the earth. My sight was imperfect, my eyelids felt closed. I disengaged my left hand, and raising it to my face, found that a mask of congealed blood covered it. I rubbed it away, and, prepared as I was for a sanguinary spectacle by the tortuous moanings of wounded men and dying horses, I closed my eyes in horror, when the clear cold moonlight revealed the sickening scene.

Directly over me, and in the very attitude in which he had groaned his last, an officer of the middle guard was stretched—our faces were nearly touching, and his open eyes had fixed their glassy stare on mine. A sword-cut had divided his upper lip, and exposing the teeth, gave to the dead man's countenance a grin so horrible and ghastly, that I who had witnessed death in every form, was glad to avert my eyes. I made a desperate effort to shake him off; but a horse's neck rested on my legs, and my feeble exertions were quite unequal to rid me of this double load.

While suffering great inconvenience of position, I felt the cold intense, and thirst intolerable. No relief was attainable; the groans of the dying were unheard, and I sullenly submitted to my

fate. But morning must soon break, and then probably I should be succoured. Could I but disengage myself from the dead man who pressed me almost to suffocation, I might endure pain, cold, and thirst. I made another effort—it failed—and in despair I laid my head upon the ground, moistened with my own blood and that of my departed enemy. Just then a voice immediately beside me, uttered a feeble supplication for some water. I turned my head, and saw a young ensign, whose leg had been shattered by the wheels of a gun, raise himself upon his elbow, and look across the field, in hope of discovering some one who would relieve him. Nor were his cries unheard: a man dressed in the dark uniform of a Prussian yager, and armed with the short sword which rifle troops carry, approached the sufferer; but, alas! his was not the errand of mercy. Seizing the wounded man rudely, and deaf to his entreaties, he commenced his work of plunder. I heard the chinking of a purse, and a trinket, a watch, or locket, glittered in the moonlight, as he tore it from the bosom of the prostrate soldier.

"Oh, no, no, I cannot, will not part with that!" a low weak voice muttered; "it was my mother's dying gift—I will never part with it." A struggle ensued, but it was a short one: as the ruffian, irritated at resistance, raised himself, and with one home-thrust, silenced the poor youth for ever. Great God! that such a scene of death should be increased by the hand of murder!

I grew sick—I feared to breathe—my death was to be the next, for he had quickly plundered the body of his victim, and turned to the dead guardsman who lay across my breast. Suddenly he stopped, listened, and gazed suspiciously around; then sank down behind a horse, and stretched himself upon the field.

My heart beat again. Two men came forward, and they too were plundering. But, surely, all could not be so ruthless as the crouching wretch beside me? Nearer and nearer they approached—and, sounds of joy! they conversed in my native tongue. I listened with exquisite delight, and never did human voices appear so sweet as theirs! They were grenadiers of the line, and one of them wore a sergeant's stripes. Without a moment's hesitation, I addressed them; and an appeal in their native language was not disregarded. I was promptly answered in kindly tones; and while one caught the defunct Frenchman by the collar and flung him aside, his comrade extricated my legs from the dead charger, and assisted me to rise up.

I found myself in the centre of a heap of corpses; to take a second step without treading on a body was impossible; yet I scarce regarded the scene of slaughter—my eyes were riveted upon one corpse, that of the poor lad whom the crouching yager had so brutally murdered.

I stood up with difficulty—a faintness overpowered me—I staggered, and would have fallen, but the sergeant supported me, while his comrade held a canteen to my mouth. It contained brandy diluted with water, and, to one parched as I was, the draught was exquisitely grateful. My deliverers appeared anxious to move off, either to obtain fresh plunder or secure that already acquired; and which, to judge from the size of their haversacks, must have been considerable. I begged them to assist me from the field: but they declined it, alleging that they must rejoin their regiment before day-break. At this moment my eyes encountered those of the yager, who lay as motionless behind the dead horse as any of the corpses that surrounded him. If I remained—and I could not walk without support—the chances were immense that the villain would speedily remove one who had witnessed a deed of robbery and murder, and I made a fresh appeal to my worthy countrymen.

"Sergeant, I will reward you handsomely—do not desert me."—"I cannot remain longer, sir: morning is breaking, and you will soon have relief enough," was the reply.—"It will never reach me: there is one within three paces, who will not permit me to look upon another sun."

Both soldiers started.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the sergeant eagerly.—"Mark you that Prussian sharpshooter, who skulks behind the horse?"

"What of him?" asked the grenadier.—"Yonder dead officer supplicated assistance from that scoundrel, and he answered him with curses, and commenced plundering him directly. I saw him take a purse, and tear away his epaulette. Some other article the poor fellow feebly attempted to retain; and the yager, before my eyes, stabbed him to the heart. Hearing your approach, he flung himself behind that charger: need I add, that there he lies until you leave this spot, and I shall most probably be his next victim?"

"You shall not, by Heaven!" exclaimed the soldier, as he drew his sword and stepped over the dead horse. The Prussian, who had no doubt watched the conference attentively, sprang upon his feet on the first movement of the sergeant; but his fate was sealed: before the soldier's comrade could unsheath his bayonet, the yager was cut down, and the murderer rolled in the agonies of death beside the unfortunate youth, whom but a few minutes before he had so ruthlessly slaughtered.

The corpse was speedily plundered by the grenadiers, and the spoil of the rifleman, when united to their booty, made as I suspect, a valuable addition.

The moonlight was now yielding to the grey tint of early day, and the chief cause of my apprehensions being removed by the yager's death, I found leisure to scrutinise my deliverers.

The first was a very powerful and athletic man, whose years might be set down at forty: his vigorous frame was perfectly unbroken, and his look bespoke a daring and unhesitating resolution. Indeed, his whole appearance was much above his rank: he seemed a war-worn, dissipated soldier; to him a field of battle was no novelty; and the perfect *nonchalance* with which he despatched the Prussian, betrayed a recklessness regarding human life rather befitting a bandit than a soldier.

His companion, a very young man, was a fine strapping flanker, and in everything appeared to be wholly governed by the will of his comrade. He touched the dead, I thought, with some repugnance, and seemed of gentler heart and milkier disposition than might be expected in a midnight plunderer upon a battle-field.

"See, the dawn breaks rapidly," said the non-commissioned officer to the young grenadier: "we must be off, Macmanus. We leave you safe,

sir; yonder black sharp-shooter will never draw another trigger. Pick up a musket for the gentleman; we must not leave him without the means of keeping stragglers at a distance, should any come prowling here, before the fatigue-parties arrive to carry off the wounded. Here, sir, take another pull at the brandy-flask; nothing keeps up a sinking heart so well."

"Thanks, my kind fellow, I owe you a life. Had you left me to yon black scoundrel, he would have served me as he did our comrade there. What are your names—your regiment? I shall take care to report your timely services to——"

The elder of the grenadiers laughed. "You are but a young soldier, sir, and this, as I suspect, your first field. I know you mean us kindly, but silence is the best service you can render us. We should have been with the advance near Genappe, instead of collecting lost property upon the plains of Waterloo. Well, we fought hard enough yesterday to allow us a right to share what no one claims, before the Flemish clowns come here by cock-crow. Adieu!" As he spoke, his companion handed me a musket, after trying the barrel with a ramrod, and ascertaining from flint and pan that it was both loaded and serviceable.

"Enough—I ask no questions. But here are a few guineas."

"Which we do not require," said the sergeant. "We have made a good night's work, and your money, young sir, we neither want nor take. If we have rendered you service, it was for the sake of the old country. It is hard to shut one's ears, when the first language that we lisped in from the cradle asks pity in the field. Farewell, sir; morning comes on apace."

"And yet," I replied, "I might perhaps at some time serve you. You know the fable. The mouse once cut a net, and saved a lion. I am indeed but a young soldier—but should I be able to be serviceable at any future period, ask for Jack Blake, and he'll remember the night of Waterloo."

"Blake!" said the elder grenadier with sharpness. "Are you from Galway?"—"I am."

"What family? The Blakes are numerous."—"Mine are of Castle Blake."

"Your father's name is Manus," said the sergeant, "if I recollect right?"—"No; he is my uncle. My parent died many years ago—I have no remembrance of him."

The soldier started—"It could not be the same," he muttered; "was he in the army?"—"Yes."

"His rank?"—"A colonel."

"His name?"—"Cæsar."

"Now, by my hopes of mercy!" exclaimed the sergeant, "I would not for all the plunder in the field have parted from you in ignorance. Macmanus, we must remove this gentleman. We will accompany him to Brussels. You and I, comrade, have wounds enough to plead apology for the hospital. You have a gash in the arm, and I a clip upon the skull, and a lance-cut in the shoulder. None of them, Mac, in faith, are mortal, but quite enough to qualify better heroes for the surgeon's hands. Come, sir, let men say what they will, there is a Providence that watches all."

Was it not strange? The man with whom entreaty failed, and money proved unavailing, conveyed me from the field with the tenderness a parent would exhibit to his only boy. Frequently he moistened my lips with brandy, and when nature was exhausted, his powerful strength sustained my sinking frame.

The sun rose rapidly, we gained the ruined causeway that crossed the field of battle, and, early as it was, a Flemish peasant was there with his cart. My protector seized the horse, and pointing to Brussels, offered him five Napoleons if he would convey me thither—the Belgian shook his head. Next and best argument, a sabre dyed with recent blood was unceremoniously produced. This seemed conclusive, and the peasant pocketed the money.

I was carefully placed in the rude vehicle, while my companions seated themselves at my side, and supported me by turns. Loss of blood, brandy too liberally administered, fatigue, the revulsion of over-excited spirits, all united to overpower me. I sunk back in the sergeant's arms—and Waterloo, though I crossed its hard-fought field, fades from my memory, and I recollect no more.

CHAPTER X.

"I'll tell you who they were, this female pair,
Lest they should seem princesses in disguise;
* * * * * *
Mistress and maid; the first the only daughter
Of an old man."

Don Juan.

DIFFICULT as our passage was across the field of battle, our route through the forest of Soignes was still more impracticable. By its solitary causeway a splendid *corps d'armée* had advanced three mornings since, in all "the pride, pomp, and circumstance of war;" now it was choked with broken equipages and dead horses—wounded men toiling slowly towards Brussels for relief—the bodies of many whose life had left them in the attempt—dismounted guns, disabled waggons—caps, drums, sabres, helmets—in short, all the wreck and ruin that the rear of even a victorious army exhibits. Through these mementoes of a hard-contested fight, our light cart slowly but safely progressed; and when I recovered my recollection, I found myself seated on some litter in a handsome street near the Grand Hotel, supported by a grenadier, while a Belgian girl bathed my face with water, and moistened my lips with wine.

I looked wildly round, as a man starts from a troubled dream. I remembered Macmanus instantly: dark and painful associations accompanied this recognition of my deliverer; the field of battle, the dead guardsman, the murdered youth, the black yager—all passed in shadowy succession, and I closed my eyes and fainted.

I was speedily restored, and on other objects my eyes opened. Macmanus was gone; I had been removed from the street; the young Belgian no longer attended me: a pretty English-looking female stood beside the bed, and a middle-aged man held my pulse, and anxiously watched my recovery.

"Where am I?" I exclaimed with a wild stare.—"Hush, my young friend; you are in very kind hands: obey me, keep quiet, and you will be speedily afoot."

"Am I in hospital?"—"You are far more comfortably situated," was the reply. "The hospitals are crowded; you are under a private roof; there stands your nurse, and I am your physician."

"My sight is bad. Where are the grenadiers?—the private with the wounded arm, and the sergeant that cut down the Prussian sharpshooter."—"He is wandering," the doctor whispered to the nurse.

"I am not, by Heaven!" I exclaimed passionately. "I saw him stab the officer; there was only a dead horse between us"—and I continued a wild and unconnected tale of facts and fancies, in which Quatre-Bras and Waterloo were mingled with scenes of very different description; and the names of Wellington and O'Moore ridiculously confused with those of Blucher and Lucinda Daly. Gradually, however, my ravings ceased, and under the influence of a powerful narcotic I became composed: love and war disturbed me with their alarms no longer; a deep sleep succeeded, and for twelve hours my repose was calm and unbroken as an infant's.

When I awoke, twilight had set in; another stranger watched me, for a plainly-dressed elderly male servant was peeping through the curtains. It was evident that I was an object of constant and kind solicitude: my head, dressed and bandaged, was resting on a down pillow; my blood-stained linen had been changed; the room was darkened, and those who were in it moved upon tiptoe when they entered or departed.

"Is he awake, Robert?" said the same female whom I had noticed with the physician in the morning.

The person to whom the question was addressed lifted the curtains to look.

"I am not only awake, my good friend," I replied, "but wonderfully recruited with the refreshing sleep I have enjoyed. But where am I?—under what roof?—and to whom am I indebted for this generous attention?" I strove to raise myself upon my elbow; both attendants gently opposed it, and the attempt convinced me of my weakness. No wonder I was feeble; beside the blood I lost upon the field, a considerable quantity had been taken from my arm by order of the doctor.

Two days passed, and I experienced unremitting attention; my wounds assumed a healthy appearance, fever abated, and the medical adviser pronounced that my recovery would be a rapid one. Still I remained ignorant of the name of my benefactor; and on this subject, a concealment was observed that seemed unnecessary and inexplicable. Of the country or grade of the persons to whom I was so deeply indebted for timely succour, I could only conjecture aught from the style of their attendants; and I concluded, after a critical examination of the domestics, that they were an English family of respectability not moving in the foremost ranks of fashion. What rendered this mysterious *incognito* of my host so remarkable was, that on every subject beside, Robert, his chief minister, was exceedingly communicative. He was an intelligent person in his way, and acquainted me with the political events and military movements, as they occurred subsequent to the battle.

The third day passed; my strength returned, my curiosity increased, and the mystery remained impenetrable: for every indirect effort to unravel it was unsuccessful. I tried Robert, and he answered my inquiry with a shake of the head, profound enough for Lord Burleigh; the doctor proved inexorable to all entreaty; and Annette, though supplicated by her black eyes and well-turned ankle, was mute as if she had been dumb from the cradle. Was ever anything more provoking? The very sex of my benefactor was unknown: I might be beholden to the bounty of an old bachelor, or under the immediate *surveillance* of a blooming belle. Except this teasing uncertainty, I had nothing to complain of; I was tenderly nursed, everything I required was supplied, and my very wishes were anticipated. My own portmanteaus and dressing-case had been conveyed from my former lodgings: in short, I was most agreeably cantonned, and in all Brussels there was not an invalid so comfortably and so mysteriously circumstanced as myself.

A restless spirit like mine tires of the confinement of a sick room. I had no companions to come in and while away a tedious hour; for my acquaintances in the city were limited to three or four brother-officers, and they were more severely wounded than myself; my servant, a private in the Rifles, had fallen on the 16th, skirmishing in the Bois de Bossu; my regiment joined Colville's brigade on the 19th, and pushed forward with the leading division; the soldiers who brought me off the field had disappeared: I was totally deserted, and all around me were strangers, though, in sooth, they were very kind ones.

The third evening came. Once or twice since morning I had heard the tinkle of a guitar, and I felt convinced that the musician was at no great distance from my chamber. Uncertainty became intolerable; I made another attempt upon Annette, and, like the preceding one, it proved a failure. She coquetted with me freely, but was too guarded to permit my *badinage* to extract a particle of information. Again an instrument was touched, and, as I thought, a voice accompanied it. I was dying of curiosity, and implored Annette to relieve it: I swore that my discretion was unbounded, and that the secret should never escape. The *demoiselle* appeared to relent, and of course, I became more eloquent and urgent. She approached the sofa, which I was now stout enough to occupy, and leaned over me; I caught her hand.

"Do, dear, dear Annette, tell me who the lady is—she who plays and sings so prettily?"—"You would betray me to Robert," she whispered archly.

"No, on my soul! You are far too handsome to be ill-natured. Will you not trust me? You must, you will."—"And you can keep a secret?" said the *soubrette*.—"I can indeed!"—"And so can I!" exclaimed the tormenting gipsy, as she tapped my cheek playfully, and ran laughing from the room.

What could I do? Nothing but curse Annette, try to sleep, and thus forget my disappointment.

"In half an hour the traitress returned. I was pettish as a school-boy, remained silent on the sofa, and determined to eschew flirtation.

"Hist, captain! surely you can't be sleeping?"

I kept my eyes closed: the attendant advanced on tiptoe, and examined me attentively, while I breathed heavily.

"He took his draught too soon, the simpleton! Well, now is the time!" and she tripped lightly from the room, leaving me, as she believed, "fast as a watchman."

Her absence was but short: she returned, and not alone. I heard a whispering, and the speakers approached me cautiously.

"Well, Miss Emily, am I not a silly girl to run such risk, and gratify your curiosity."

"How soundly he sleeps!" said a voice so soft and thrilling that I felt the blood rush to my cheeks. "See—how feverish he is!—how his face flushes, Annette! I fear he is not so well as the doctor thinks him to be."

I would have given a finger for a peep, but feared to open an eyelid, lest the fair visitor should take alarm and fly from the apartment. Was I, then, under the protection of this gentle being? I feared to breathe, lest one syllable she uttered should escape me, while again she addressed the attendant.

"How differently he looks, Annette, to what he did when, on that fearful morning, he was left upon the street bleeding and lifeless. How I trembled when I requested my father's leave to have him carried in, for fear he would refuse me. Does he sleep long, Annette?"

"Oh yes, for hours; but that is no reason we should dally. Lord! if Robert found us here, I should lose my place, and, in spite of gout and rheumatism, before midnight struck, you would be hurried off, Heaven knows whither; for a soldier's very name terrifies the old gentleman. Hist! is that a step in the corridor? Come, Miss Emily," and Annette made a movement towards the door.

I ventured to look up: a beautiful girl was leaning over me, and eyes of soft and gentle expression met mine. She started, and uttered a half-suppressed exclamation.

"Stay, lady; fear nothing; I would not, for worlds, alarm you! Permit me but to thank you as I should, and offer you the poor acknowledgment of my gratitude."

I caught her hand; surprise deprived her of the power to leave me; while Annette, thunderstruck at the discovery, vainly endeavoured to disengage her lovely companion from my firm but gentle hold.

"Unhand me, sir!" said the same sweet voice that had fascinated me. "I am punished for my imprudence, and I deserve it: indeed, we thought you were sleeping."

Poor girl, her alarm was pitiable.

"Come, sir!" said Annette, "is this fair?—is it honourable? You little dream what mischief our imprudence and your folly may occasion. Do let my mistress leave this room."

"And shall I never again see you, lady? I may not, dare not, risk offence by detaining you for a moment; you are at perfect liberty. You saved my life; you came, angel-like, to relieve me; may I not thank you? Shall I not, when I quit this couch of sickness, kneel at your feet, and bless you as my deliverer?"

"Well, well," exclaimed Annette impatiently; "Miss Emily may not possibly object hereafter to a visit; but, for Heaven's sake: do not delay us now."

The hand I held in mine trembled—timidly I touched it with my lips—deep burning blushes overspread the loveliest face I had ever looked upon till now; and next moment I was alone, and Emily and her companion had disappeared.

My heart throbbed wildly. And was this my gentle preserver? The mystery was dissolving fast; Annette was now in my power, and I would soon wring the secret from her. Before many minutes elapsed, other footsteps sounded in the gallery, and Robert, attended by the doctor, entered my apartment.

The latter touched my pulse, seemed astonished, and he pronounced me feverish. This he had not expected; but he would send me a composing draught; and after a brief visit, both retired.

Feverish, indeed, I was; but they little guessed the cause: agitation, and not disease, occasioned it. Weak and nervous as I was, I half imagined the late occurrence a coinage of the brain, and the young and lovely being who visited my chamber, only the splendid creation of excited fancy. But Annette's return realised the whole, and my beautiful visitor was indeed her mistress and my protector.

That night I found it impossible to converse with the *soubrette* in private, as more than once Robert interrupted our *tête-à-tête*. Early next day the hospital director visited, and pronounced me convalescent, and gave me permission to leave my room. My wounds were healing fast, and weakness alone remained. With Robert's assistance I dressed, and was conducted to a lower apartment that looked upon a pretty flower-garden in the rear of the mansion. All day I hoped to gain a passing glimpse of the gentle Emily; but, alas! I hoped in vain. I heard occasionally the tingle of a guitar; and through the open window, once or twice a voice reached me, whose silver tones could never be mistaken. Robert, as usual, was constant in his attendance; and every delicacy suited to recruit the strength of an invalid was liberally supplied. But no Annette. Where was she? I dared not ask, lest the question should create suspicion. The day wore heavily through; I thought it endless. At last, evening fell; and when the time arrived when I should retire for the night, Robert lighted me to my chamber, undressed, assisted me to bed, and left me to court repose.

If the gentle god did not descend upon my lids with his accustomed alacrity, I had none but myself to blame; for, if the truth were told, I went to bed the sulkiest gentleman in Brussels.

CHAPTER XI.

A VISIT.—EMILY CLIFDEN.—AND A DISCOVERY.

"Your love must live a maid at home,
And therefore has he closely mew'd her up,
Because she shall not be annoy'd with suitors."
Taming of the Shrew.

"I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished."
The Rivals.

Two days more and no intelligence—my life monotonous as that of a mill-horse—I ate, drank, slept, walked in the garden, listened to the guitar, and wondered what had spirited Annette away, whose good offices to me were now discharged by deputy, in the person of a fair Fleming.

I had imagined that when once able to move about, I should have found small difficulty in satisfying my curiosity with a full discovery of my

unknown protectors; but never was man more astray. My host was a phlegmatic Belgian, who adored his pipe, and delighted in monosyllables—his wife deaf as a post—and the attendant willing enough to communicate information, of which, however, her stock was rather scanty. All I could learn was, that my benefactors were English travellers, who had been interrupted in their tour by the unexpected advance of Napoleon; and that the old gentleman was laid up by a severe attack of gout, and the young lady a close prisoner in the drawing-room. Their names were Tomkins, or Thompson, or Thornton; and they were very wealthy, as they employed the best physician, and paid an exorbitant rent for their apartments. Moreover, it appeared that to the importunities of mademoiselle I was indebted for my introduction to the mansion: and I could farther collect, that I should gratify the master and his man by shortening my visit, although the mistress and her maid would willingly persuade the old gentleman that my cure was far from being complete.

Indeed, had I a doubt that by one moiety of the household I was considered *un de trop*, Robert, as he placed wine and fruit upon the table after dinner, would have removed it. He complimented me upon my amended looks—hinted that confinement was not only unnecessary, but injurious, for the weather was beautiful, and I must be weary of the house. There was no mistaking him, and the sooner I beat a retreat the better.

I, of course, was not inclined to remain an intruder upon the hospitality of one who was, and determined to remain, a stranger; and therefore I requested apartments to be provided for me in a neighbouring hotel, whither I could remove next day. Robert received my commands with evident pleasure, and promised to execute them that very evening, as he had some business to transact in the city.

Left to myself, I could not but reflect on the very strange family to whom accident had introduced me. I was singularly circumstanced—the object of unwilling attention; a guest tolerated, but not welcomed; entertained *in formâ pauperis*, as they say in law, rather than with the free spirit a generous host exhibits to a fellow gentleman when residing beneath his roof-tree. And who was he who looked upon me with suspicion, and avoided all personal acquaintance, as if I had been a highwayman? From anything I could conjecture, he might be an East-end stock-broker, a dyer from Leeds, a razor-maker from Sheffield, or a pluralist from Cambridge? and would I, in whose veins the reddest blood in Galway circulated, brook such indignities from one who might have been vulgar enough to make a fortune? The thing was intolerable!

I had been, in honour of my convalescence, allowed three glasses of wine by the physician; but, from wounded pride I fancy, I forgot the reckoning. As the flask diminished, the blood of the Blakes rose in inverse proportion, and the eyes of an endless ancestry seemed turned on me—men who, for centuries, had been shooting others, and been shot themselves—who had broken necks and tradesmen—ran off with, or from, wives by the score—and, in short, lived and died as became one of the "tribes," and gentlemen of consideration. I filled another bumper and peeped into the large pier-glass. I had been that morning rather particular with my toilet; my braided jacket was a correct fit, my arm in a sling I thought was rather interesting, and the honourable scar across my forehead became well a true disciple of the sword. Tinkle went the guitar: I thought of the sweet blue eye that had gazed so tenderly on me a fictitious sleeper—and would I leave the house without bidding that fair girl farewell? Surely not.

Just then I heard Robert's voice in the lobby, giving directions to the young Belgian relative to certain matters to be attended to when he was absent. Now, then, was the time—the coast clear—the citadel unguarded! I looked in the pier-glass again. "Master Jack Blake," quoth Conceit, "there are worse-featured fellows in Brussels than thyself!"—Tinkle, tinkle!—"*En avant*, Jack Blake!" I crossed the room and laid my hand upon the lock. Alas! the touch was a damper; mine was but Dutch courage after all, for, like honest Bob's, it began to evaporate through the finger-ends. Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle! went the guitar. "What the deuce ails thee, Jack?" said Pride. "You who bore the brunt of Waterloo gallantly, and crossed sabres with a veteran of 'the Guard!'"—Armed with that species of desperation, with which gentlemen who lead forlorn hopes provide themselves, I mounted the staircase like a hero, and, instead of turning off by the narrow corridor to my own quarters, boldly pushed forward till I gained the landing-place, and stood before the apartment that contained "my own blue belle."

Yet, were I to confess the truth, I would have given a month's pay to have been again safely deposited in "mine own great chamber." "Hang it!" whispered Pride, "don't run, whatever you do." The instrument that I had faintly heard below, now sounded distinctly, and seemed touched by a practised hand, while a very sweet voice sang to its accompaniment a fashionable canzonet, which I had often heard and admired since I came to Brussels. It ceased: I dared not stay longer where I was, lest I should be detected and treated as a spy, and like Captain Absolute, invoked the powers of impudence to befriend me. I had nearly screwed up my courage to attempt an *entrée* of the premises, when the feat was rendered unnecessary,—the door opened, and Annette unexpectedly presented herself.

I never witnessed a more confounded waiting-woman. For a moment both of us preserved a dignified silence, she being speechless from astonishment, while the opening address I had been preparing for the blue-eyed belle was not quite adapted to excuse my intrusion to the lady of the bed-chamber.

"In the name of everything mischievous, what brought you here?" she said, in an under tone, which betrayed surprise and anger. I muttered something about gratitude, and leaving the house.

"Hang your gratitude!" said the attendant pettishly. "I wish you were with your regiment, or at the bottom of the sea, and we safe out of Brussels. How fortunate that Robert has gone to look after the carriage!"

"And procure lodgings for me, Annette."

"Ah! I did not know that he had been so usefully employed," said the attendant archly;

"once he gets you fairly out of this house, we may then have a reasonable hope of quiet."

"Nay, dear Annette, I know you will be distressed to lose your patient; but why desert me as you have done? My recovery has been retarded by your unkindness, and I have been dying piecemeal of neglect."

"But quite able, notwithstanding, to scamper over the house, and intrude upon apartments where it was never imagined you would have had assurance to approach," replied the waiting-woman.

"Well, well; my offences are nearly at an end; I leave this house in the morning, and in another day or two shall set out to join my regiment in France. I came now to bid Miss Emily adieu, and thank the prettiest nurse for her attentions that ever smoothed a soldier's pillow." While speaking, I slipped a small purse into her hand, and snatched a kiss with all the discretion that an open door required. Was it gold, impudence, or flattery that succeeded? Annette relented.

"And are you leaving this, indeed, to-morrow?"—"Indeed, pretty one, I am: and I shall quit this house very wretched, if my kind nurse refuses me permission to bid her gentle lady farewell."

"May Heaven forgive you," said the *soubrette*, "if through mistaken compassion I agree; but there—go in—and like a dear good fellow promise me that you will not delay. If Robert returned unobserved, Miss Emily would be lectured, and I should lose my place."

"And is that all, Annette?"—"*That all!* Fray, worthy sir, could you provide me with another?" said the attendant with an *espiègle* look.

"Why, faith, I fear a lady's-maid at the present moment would be rather an incumbrance; my provision for you, Annette, should therefore be a matrimonial one, and I would marry you to the sharpest shot in a picked company of Rifles."

"I thank you," replied the attendant, with a profound courtesy; "and, with the honour of his hand, I should have liberty, I suppose, to wash his shirts, and share his daily shilling. No, gallant captain, I shall try and remain as I am; for, believe me, that neither my mistress nor myself are at present designed for campaigning."

She smiled significantly, and unclosed the door, which had been previously shut to.

"Miss Emily, here comes a gentleman to take his leave: and if you will please to hint to him, that the more rapidly he ends the ceremony, the safer it will be for a certain lady and her maid." Then turning to me as I was about to enter, "Do not, for pity's sake, delay. Although I have been confined to my room these two days, and tortured by a vile tooth-ache, I must go and watch from the front window, lest Robert should return sooner than we expect, and discover how very prudently we have employed ourselves in his absence."

I firmly believe, that never was a more embarrassed gentleman introduced to the *boudoir* of a beauty. The hurried interview that accident procured for me, had fixed impressions on my fancy sufficiently favourable as to my fair protector; but they fell infinitely short of what the opening charms of this artless girl realized, as with a confusion greater than my own she requested me to be seated. I approached the sofa from which she had risen at my entrance. There lay the guitar—the music-book was open in the stand, while a portfolio, pencils, and drawings, scattered round the table, marked the occupations which my visit had interrupted. My address was sufficiently incoherent, but still fully as connected as the reply; and we sat down, endeavouring to find in the ordinary subjects of conversation some means of rendering our *tête-à-tête* less awkward than its opening foreboded.

But youth, unchilled by the frost of time, has nothing beyond a first timidity to overcome. I recovered my self-possession, while my fair companion's alarm appeared to subside rapidly. We were both thrown into a situation of some novelty—for she was the preserver, I the preserved. She soon began to ask questions relative to the battle; and as she listened to my narration of Waterloo, her cheeks blanched and glowed, as I described the changing fortunes of the field. No wonder that when Annette returned, she expressed boundless astonishment at finding us thus quietly engaged—and so quickly had time flown, that, while the *soubrette* declared she had been for an hour in the window, I should have guessed the extent of her watch at but a quarter of the period—were the mean between us taken, it would more likely describe the true time.

"Worthy captain," said the attendant, "how long, according to the regulations of your corps, will it be necessary for me to be exposed to the toothache, while you return thanks to this young lady for obtaining your admission to this house, when tumbled from a cart upon the pavement, like a box of bad oranges?"

"Truly, pretty Mistress Annette, I am so very happy where I am, that I find it rather difficult to answer your question: for were I permitted to exercise free-will, I should be in no hurry to recommence movements to the lower storey."

"Remain, sir, if you please," returned the Abigail smartly; "and when Robert comes back, I shall not be much surprised to see another personage added to the party"—and she directed the latter portion of her speech to her young mistress, with the petulance that a spoiled domestic will sometimes venture to use.

But Annette had probably calculated too far upon the forbearance of the fair girl her mistress. I saw her eye sparkle and her colour rise; and in a tone that forbade reply, she calmly, but firmly, ordered her attendant from the room to bring up coffee in Robert's place.

When the *soubrette* had disappeared, we both remained for some moments silent. The lady, though visibly embarrassed, was the first to speak.

"I felt displeasure, sir, that my servant should question the right or propriety of receiving my father's guest in my father's apartments. No doubt there may appear to you a mystery in our hospitality as far as yourself is concerned; and I shall be candid with you, and explain why any concealment has been resorted to. We live generally in great retirement; for my protector's health is infirm, and consequently his habits are not as sociable as otherwise they might be. An excursion, undertaken for my amusement, turned out from unforeseen occurrences anything but a pleasant one. We were nearly surprised by the French advance—driven back on Brussels—our carriage disabled—benighted in unfrequented

roads—and, after an infinity of annoyances, with a broken vehicle and jaded horses, at last found shelter here. Fatigue and alarm brought upon my father a violent attack of gout, which rendered him unable to move, when the success of the British arms had opened the communications, which the inroad of the French had nearly interrupted. Here we of course remained for the first days, terrified lest Napoleon should succeed, and then shocked by hourly exhibitions of sufferers from the field of battle, who, from the evening of the 16th, passed our windows in endless succession on their way to the hospitals.

"Finding himself unable to bear a carriage, my father despatched a trusty servant to England, to execute some important business, on the same morning that accident discovered you almost dead upon our threshold. I asked and obtained permission to have you removed from the street to the apartment recently vacated. Our servants were your nurses, and the family physician attended to your wounds. In intruding once upon your privacy, I trust a better motive than idle curiosity occasioned it; and indeed, sir, it was under the full conviction that you were sleeping securely from the influence of a composing draft."

As she alluded to the evening interview at my apartment, the colour on her cheeks rose; while I ardently expressed my gratitude, and assured her how perfectly I was aware, that to humanity alone I had been indebted for that visit. She smiled, and thus continued:—

"I apprised you that my father's habits are retired; and, averse to any intercourse with strangers, he made it a request that you should not be acquainted with even the name of him to whom you owed a temporary asylum. I promised to obey his wish, and I feel I have but to intimate that wish to you." I bowed respectful submission to the interdict, and she proceeded.

"We are here under assumed names—for there are persons in Brussels whom it is my father's pleasure to avoid. Possibly, at some future time, you and I, sir, may meet as we should do. Till then, we remain unknown—to you, as a guest—to me, as a daughter—my parent's wishes should be sacred."

I looked with astonishment at the beautiful being whose silver tones were still thrilling on my ear. She had not reckoned sixteen summers, and was opening into womanhood with a rich promise of surpassing loveliness. Tall, slight, and elegant, a few years would mature that nymph-like figure to perfection. Her face was rather intellectual than regular; and the intelligence her open brow and clear blue eye conveyed, was of that soft and confiding character which requires unforeseen occurrences to elicit its latent spirit. Indeed, the recent excitement over, my gentle companion seemed alarmed at the effort she had made in addressing a stranger: the burning cheek, the downcast eye, told that natural timidity had resumed the mastery again, and a respectful acquiescence in her wishes for concealment was necessary on my part, to restore the ease and confidence of our interview.

Just then Annette returned; she placed a tray upon the table with coffee and fruit—curtsied with affected humility to the lady—gave me a look, arch, mischievous, and reproachful, and hastily retired.

The plot was thickening fast, for evening had overshadowed the "fair city," and wrapped it in "her sober livery." Had we been prudent, our *tête-à-tête* should have terminated ere now—but, aware that Robert was directed personally to oversee the repairs of the carriage, I put my trust in the clumsiness of a Belgian artist, and sate on. Lights were brought in—coffee removed—Annette vanished—and Emily and I were left to discuss military affairs and new music.

As I gazed upon my fair companion, I thought her features were not altogether unknown. Where had I seen that face? In vain I taxed my memory; and yet, the more I looked, I felt the more convinced that Emily was not entirely a stranger. I should have expressed these suspicions, but it might appear an indirect attempt to satisfy a curiosity which she had inhibited so strongly. We talked freely, as young spirits will when graver looks are not present to control them: I turned her music over, praised the beautiful efforts of her pencil, admired some rare *bijouterie* in her buhl cabinet, when, alas! the time-piece on the mantel struck ten. Emily started—I took the hint, rose to say farewell, with a full determination that, were I to put Robert to the sword, and carry the drawing-room by escalade, I would obtain a parting interview on the morrow.

In the course of our *tête-à-tête*, I alluded to the death of a French colonel of voltigeurs, who had fallen in the affair of the Bois de Bossu at Quatre-Bras, and mentioned the celerity with which the body had been plundered. The corpse had been stripped before my own eyes; and as the gallant Frenchman was decorated with military vanity in the numerous insignia won by him on former fields, I obtained them from the spoilers for a couple of Napoleons. Emily had been interested in the detail; and as I happened to have the colonel's cross of the Legion of Honour in my sabretash, I pressed her to accept it. She would have declined receiving even this trifling token from a stranger, while I urged her to retain it, as a small memorial of one whom she had so generously relieved. She saw that a refusal pained me, and at last my entreaties prevailed.

"Farewell!" I said, "dear lady, may every blessing be yours! Sometimes think of one who never can forget you!" I raised the hand that held the cross respectfully to my lips—her eyes sparkled—the roses covered her neck and brows—but the hand remained within my hold, and unreproved my lips had touched it more than once.

At that moment a gleam of light shot through the apartment and arrested our attention. We turned hastily round. In an open side-door, a tall figure arrayed in a loose dressing-gown, with a lighted taper in his hand, was standing, gazing on us with a stern and motionless expression, that seemed to belong rather to a marble effigy than breathing clay. I shuddered; but Emily, with a shriek, averted her face and fainted on the sofa.

To heighten the confusion, Robert and Annette added themselves to the company by another door. Both seemed astounded and irate—but, to do her justice, the *soubrette*, in her ebullitions of sorrow and surprise, far exceeded the whole of the *dramatis personæ*—and no wonder.

CHAPTER XII.

INTERROGATORIES. — AN UNEXPECTED RELATIVE.—THE CROSS OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR.

"High and inscrutable the old man stood,
Calm in his voice, and calm within his eye—
Not always signs with him of calmest mood."
BYRON.

"*Bassanio.* Alas! it is a trifle;
I will not shame myself to give you this.
Portia. I will have nothing else but only this;
And now, methinks, I have a mind to it."
Merchant of Venice.

UNDISMAYED by the *brouillerie*, my first impulse was to fly to Emily's assistance, and support her with my unwounded arm: but the figure in the door-way advanced, and in a tone of command that intimated his will was arbitrary here, he motioned me to resign my charge to the care of her attendants. Her recovery was rapid—the domestics removed her from the drawing-room—and the strange apparition in the dressing-gown and I remained *vis-à-vis*.

As I had the advantage of a recent *escapade*, it might have been imagined that in this dilemma I should profit by experience; but in my life, I never felt so craven and cast down. As yet neither had uttered a syllable; and I waited in fear and trembling for the spectral intruder to open his battery. I endeavoured to rally my sinking courage—I strove to look boldly in the old man's face—mine met his withering glance—I dropped my eyes again,—and I would rather have tried conclusions with Daly and O'Moore in a saw-pit, than stand the blighting look with which this formidable personage appeared to search my very soul.

"Who are you?" was the first question asked, in tones so sepulchral, that they jarred through my system like the shock of a torpedo. I made no reply—and again the question was repeated, "Who are you?"—"A gentleman."

"Umph! that term nowadays is a very general one. From your trappings I presume you are a soldier."—"You have guessed rightly," I replied.

"What brought you to this apartment?"—"Accident."

"I disbelieve it. Say, was it an invitation from the mistress or the maid—or, better still, a joint one?" inquired the old man bitterly.—"I have answered your question, and your inference is incorrect."

"Oh! possibly it may be so," said he of the dressing-gown. "It is part of your creed, I have been told, young gentleman, to lie in love affairs—the end sanctifies the means, and that's sufficient—What is your name?"—"That you will excuse my mentioning."

"But for what purpose did you come into this apartment? that I must know."—"Tell me first the right, by which you assume a privilege of interrogating me as you have done."

"So," exclaimed the old man sarcastically, "I must establish the right of ownership—and to which of those concerns, worthy sir—the chamber, or the lady?"—"To both," I returned drily, "if you require any information from me."

"Well then, fair sir—I must gratify you—and submit my pretensions for exercising some small control over both. This chamber is my drawing-room—the lady is my daughter."—"I stand corrected, sir; and if you will rest yourself upon the sofa—as your feet appear infirm—I shall answer your queries as fully as I can——"

"Or the lady's reputation warrants," added the old gentleman with much severity.

"You are totally in error, sir. Be seated; hear me calmly, and I will reply honestly."

"Fairly promised. Who are you?"—"A British officer, rescued from the street by your humanity; and who——"

"Would repay the obligation by depriving me of my child," he added.

"You wrong me, sir," I exclaimed passionately—"you do, by Heaven! I never contemplated—never dreamed of so much villany. You wrong me—but worse far, you wrong your daughter."

"Then why are you here? Why did I surprise you pressing your suit—my eyes, though aged, do not commonly deceive me."—"On this occasion they have," I returned; "I was bidding my kind benefactress farewell, and pressing on her acceptance the poor token of a soldier's gratitude—a paltry cross picked off the field of battle. At that very moment I was leaving her—a moment later, and you would have found her alone."

"Umph! Have you told me all?"—"I have, by my honour!"

"Annette, of course assisted you?" he said quietly.—"She did not; guided by the strings of the guitar, I found my way to the drawing-room." He twitched his features as if in pain—I remarked it; and stooping on the floor, arranged a hassock for his foot to rest upon. He looked at me with some shade of kindness—the slight attention was not lost.

"Ay," he muttered, "a softer hand should have done that"—and then continued in a tone of voice, less marble than that with which he had hitherto addressed me.—"Are your wounds healed?"—"Thanks to the care bestowed upon me in this house, they are nearly so; and I shall in a few days be enabled to rejoin my regiment, in time I hope to witness the close of the campaign."

"And was not," said the old man, "two days' butchery, such as the world has rarely witnessed, enough to gorge you, boy, but you must already pant for fresh slaughter?"

I was silent.

"Where do your parents live? could they not have given you some honester and safer calling?"—"They are dead—my profession was my own free choice."

"Where did they live?"—"In Ireland."

"What was your father?"—"A soldier."

"Umph! Did he die upon the field?"—"Alas! no—he fell by the hand of an assassin."

"Your mother, boy?" he exclaimed sharply; "who was your mother?"—"An Englishwoman."

The stranger grew pale.

"You are unwell, sir?"—"Yes, ring the bell."

I did so, and Robert answered it.

"Bring some wine and water here."

It was done—the old man waved his hand faintly—the servant obeyed—and once more we were left together.

He remained for a long time silent—then beckoned me to fill a glass of wine, which I presented, and he drank. Turning his eyes upon my face, he scrutinised it, as if he would have

examined every feature separately. "Great God!" he murmured, "a son the image of the father." Then, resuming his customary coldness, he remarked: "You lost your parents when young?"—"Yes—I was an orphan from the cradle."

"You have relatives, no doubt. In what degree does the nearest stand—who is he?"—"I can tell his name," I replied, "but nothing more. If you ask for my kindest kinsman, I have an uncle who watched over me like a parent, and for him I entertain a son's regard."

"Pshaw! I know him," said the senior with great bitterness—"a blundering, thin-skinned savage, who either does not understand English, or tortures civil language into premeditated insult. They call him Manus."

I was thunderstruck, and stared at him of the dressing-gown. He proceeded:—

"But, as I infer from your answer, you have another and nearer relative. Describe him."—"That I am unable to do—I never saw him."

"Indeed—and yet he is more closely allied to you, it seems, than the crazy islander who adopted you."—"A near relative he is assuredly," I answered, "and I might apply to him Hamlet's phrase—

"A little more than kin and less than kind."

"Umph! he had his reasons, no doubt."—"None for abandoning me. If my parents sinned, it was hard to visit the unborn with their offending."

"Have you sought out this stern relative.—Did you endeavour to propitiate him—did you consult him on your course of life?"

"Not I, by Heaven!" I exclaimed; "wherefore should I? He who was deaf to a daughter's prayer, was not likely to be moved by a grandchild's. My father humbled his proud spirit, and he was repelled; my mother supplicated his forgiveness, and he refused it; I had nothing but unkindness to expect, and why should I stoop to kiss the hand that spread thorns over the dying pillows of my parents? No—with only the inheritance of a name—nothing to hold my way through life with but youth, health, and my sword—let that unrelenting man dispense wealth and lands as he lists, the son shall never stoop lower than the father."

I had warmed insensibly during our *tête-à-tête*, for he of the dressing-gown struck a thrilling chord when he recalled the unhappy histories of my parents. A twinge of gout appeared to agonise his features; he groaned as if in pain; I was about to offer him assistance, when the door opened, and another person joined us—it was Emily.

When her light figure crossed the room, the old man made a strong effort to recover his customary calmness. The tone of his voice as he addressed her, was different from any I had heard him use before, although it was broken and subdued—"My dear love, what brings you here?"

"Then you are no longer angry with me, father,"—she replied, bending her rosy lips until they rested on his cheek. "Alas! you wronged me—and you wronged this gentleman, when you imagined our interview was aught but accidental—had I suspected there was impropriety in his visit, believe me I would have declined it, and given you no reason for displeasure."

"My sweet love," said the old man, "appearances were unfavourable—yet, I should have known you better. But remember, Emily," and his voice sank, "I loved *once* and was deserted. *Should you too forget me*,—I have not firmness to bear it as I ought, and it would kill me. Oh God! how similar the scene that nineteen years since left me forlorn and comfortless. But then I had a heart could suffer and conceal it—a resolution that human weakness could not subdue. Now I am a broken reed—a nerveless dotard. Yet, Emily—you will close the old man's eyes—you will hang over his bed, and on you his dying look will turn, as upon the last object that bound him to the earth. Pshaw! this is womanish—disease unstrings the nerves, and we become unable to rally our spirits when we need them most. I want no explanation from you, love. This gentleman has been candid, and removed every latent doubt. Retire to your chamber. Forgive the pain I have unintentionally caused—I have some few questions to ask this youth; and our conversation, as I will be brief, so also shall it be free from anything of unkindness."

But the fair girl still lingered, and appeared anxious to communicate something which she found difficulty in expressing.

"Father I am probably more to blame than you yet know—but it may not be too late to retrieve my error, if it be one. I have accepted this present from——" and her eyes fell upon the carpet, while she placed the cross within his hand.

"Whence came this?" he said presenting it to me.—"It was a relic from the field of battle, and I offered it to my kind benefactress as a memorial of my gratitude."

He of the dressing-gown examined the cross of the Legion of Honour with indifference.—"And this," he said, "was rudely torn from the breast of the expiring fool, who, on an hundred occasions, had encountered death and suffering to win the bauble! Such is war—such is glory, my friend! And, Emily, would you wish to keep this memorial of bloodshed—or, to call it by its milder title, victory?"

She cast her eyes down, while her pale and agitated features crimsoned.

"Speak, Emily—and speak fearlessly."—"I would retain it," she said faintly, "if you permitted."

The old man handed her the cross; "Keep it, child—it will do less mischief among a woman's fooleries, than as the prize for murder and devastation, for which it was originally designed. And now, my love, good night!"

She bent her head down upon his bosom, while he affectionately commended her to the care of Heaven; then turning, presented her hand to me, which I pressed in mine.

"Farewell, sir; I trust your recovery will be rapid as we all wish it;" and with a graceful obesiance she left the room: and the old gentleman of the dressing-gown and I were once more companions.

It was strange how suddenly his bearing altered. No longer morose and cynical, he turned the conversation with great art, till by degrees, he got me to speak upon the leading incidents of my life. Need I say it was rather a general narrative than a faithful detail, and that certain passages were entirely omitted—among these, my early adven-

tures in the militia, and the supper at the Rainbow, were included. "On their own merits modest men are dumb;" and I neither chronicled my proficency at piquet, nor even hinted at the superior *ton* of my London acquaintances. After an hour's conversation, he intimated a wish to retire; and telling me that Robert would speedily attend to light me to my chamber, pressed my hand within his trembling grasp, muttered a "God bless you!" and glided stiffly through the same side-door by which he had made his unexpected *entrée*.

I remained ten minutes alone—who were these singular people? The old man knew my uncle—the girl's face was decidedly that of an acquaintance. Surely some of the music-books or portfolios would bear their owner's name. I turned over three or four without success—at last, in the fly-leaf of an album, a name appeared—it was Emily Clifden. The mystery was over. The fair girl I had so singularly discovered was the adopted daughter of Mr. Harrison—and stranger still, I had braved the anger and won the blessing of my grandfather! While lost in a sea of thoughts and phantasies, the door opened, and Robert entered with a taper.

The domestic's manners had undergone a marvellous change; I expected from him reproaches, if not insolence—but he very ceremoniously showed me to my apartment, assisted me to undress, bandaged my arm, wished me a respectful good-night, and vanished.

I was agitated and disinclined to sleep—for an hour I paced the room—my brain was in a whirl, and fancy commenced castle-building. It was desirable that I should not allow my recovery to be retarded, and I determined to compose myself to rest. A sedative was on the table; and, though I had discontinued it, I thought an opiate would now be serviceable. Accordingly, I swallowed the potion, tumbled into bed, fell into a profound sleep, and before I unclosed my eyes, the sun had risen splendidly over the fair city, and all but "the old and weary" had for hours been engaged in the endless anxieties of existence.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEPARTURE.—LETTERS.—ADVANCE OF THE ALLIES UPON PARIS.

"*Falstaff.*—Thou'lt forget me when I am gone.
Doll.—By my troth, thou'lt set me a weeping, an' thou sayest so; prove that I ever dress myself handsome till thy return."

SHAKSPEARE.

"If thou hadst died as honour dies,
Some new Napoleon might arise
To shame the world again:
But who would soar the solar height,
To set in such a starless night?"
Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte.

I THOUGHT that Robert was unusually long in making his appearance. My watch had run down, but the sunbeams on the wall told plainly that morning was far advanced. I seized the large hand-bell upon my table, and after sounding "a loud alarum," the Belgian "spider-brusher" answered the summons.

She was the bearer of two packets—one having the well-known superscription of my loving cousin "Jack the Devil," while the other was directed in stiff old-school characters, and with the impress of a seal ring of my grandfather's, worth forty marks. The Flemish handmaiden acquainted me that one epistle had been given her by a soldier, and the other by Robert, with an injunction that it should be safely delivered to me when awake, but that on no account should I be disturbed. Furthermore, it appeared that the young lady sent me her regards, and a caution against travelling too speedily; and that she seemed much distressed at leaving Brussels.

"Leaving Brussels!" I exclaimed, as I sprang bolt upright on my bed.

"Why, yes—at leaving the city"—replied the attendant. "It was quite sudden: at bedtime nobody in the house had even a suspicion that the family would move for days. At daylight the servants were called up, the baggage packed, and at seven o'clock the carriage drove from the door."

I was thunderstruck! I broke the old man's billet: it was short and didactic—contained an acknowledgment of our relationship, and a wish for my prosperity—some good advice, and a caution against gallantry and play—intimated that on my good conduct his future consideration depended—desired me to draw annually on Puget, Bainbridge, and Co. for two hundred pounds, and inclosed a year's subsidy in advance. He requested me to write to him quarterly, and concluded by saying that, "Miss Clifden sent her compliments."

I let the letter fall upon the counterpane. The relation I had so strangely discovered had vanished like a spectre; and Emily, whom I loved with the youthful ardency of early passion, was spirited away, and not a hope held out that I should ever see her again. My first thought was an instant pursuit. But what end would be answered, even if I did overtake them? I should probably irritate the old gentleman beyond forgiveness. The attempt was madness; I abandoned it; and, like a whipped school-boy, flung the letter and inclosure on the table.

The epistle of my worthy kinsman next presented its well-remembered hieroglyphics; I could have sworn to his handwriting in a court of justice, for, among the eternity of Blakes, none wrote like "Jack the Devil."

The information this letter contained was varied and extensive. The opening report upon the state of the kennel and stud was satisfactory; the pack was healthy, the young horses promising, and the huntsman had recovered the full use of his damaged limb. My uncle Manus had been confined with gout, and at feud with Mr. O'Sullivan of "the Blazer's," touching the royalties of a fox-cover, to which the rival kennels asserted claims. Manus had established his manorial prerogatives; and there was greater joy at Castle Blake for this important achievement, than the victory of Waterloo had occasioned. My aunt's health, spiritual and corporal, was excellent; the jubilee had gone off with *éclat*, to the great comfort of all true catholics; and a month's spa drinking at Outerade, had fully re-established the good lady's stomach, which the previous abstinence, consequent upon religious operations, had sadly disorganized. Father Roger was once more domesticated in the mansion, and Denis O'Brien in full force.

As to Jack himself, he had been obliged to

relinquish all aspirations after forensic honours, and, for the recovery of his health, obtain a commission in the Irish militia. He had been lucky enough to succeed to a company in the Roscommon, unexpectedly vacated by Dominick Bodkin, esquire, who popped out of the croupier's chair in a fit of apoplexy, at the half-yearly inspection, while decanting a cooper of claret. As he died in discharge of duty, the regiment interred him with military honours, and intended to erect a monument to his memory in the chapel of Shinroe. To this distinguished officer Jack the Devil had succeeded; and for the future he was entitled to write himself, "in bill, warrant, quittance, and obligation," *Captain Blake.*

After some trifling notices of sundry female members of the establishment, it would appear that Jack the Devil had reserved his concluding paragraph exclusively for disastrous news. After he had retired from the metropolis for the advantage of native air, under the advice of the surgeon-general, and with the full concurrence of the board of Alma-Mater, Miss Lightbody had not proved herself a Penelope. She had, unluckily, a propensity for tea-parties; and at one of her *soirées* a misunderstanding occurred among the company, and a young linendraper in the *mêlée* had been ejected from the first-floor window. The citizen, as it happened, encountered much bodily damage in the descent; and, regardless of the delicacy of her situation, Miss Lightbody was favoured with an interview at the police-office, and then and there obliged to give securities for a personal appearance at the next sessions. In the course of judicial inquiry, anecdotes rather calculated to compromise her character were elicited. She had commenced life with a troop of wandering equestrians; and it was broadly insinuated, that in this community female morals were not regulated on the strictest principles of conventual austerity. In short, Jack the Devil was induced to renounce the promised honours of paternity—and the armorial bearings of the Lightbodys, were not to be quartered in the ancient escutcheon of the Blakes.

But, though my kinsmen glossed it over, the wind-up of his letter was of a more serious complexion. The old agent of Castle Blake had died suddenly, and Manus's affairs were discovered to be exceedingly disordered; interest moneys had been suffered to accumulate; debts had awfully increased; and for the last three years, the sub-sheriff had been quieted at the expense of a regular annuity of three hundred pounds. Several creditors were now importunate; and of these, the most formidable, both in amount and urgency of demand, was Mrs. Blake Casey, who had purchased up, as it turned out, different securities, and actually threatened to place a receiver upon the property.

These were indeed unwelcome tidings. In the world there was not a man so badly calculated to disentangle an embarrassed estate as my honest-hearted uncle, and the heir-apparent was far more likely to add to the incumbrances than diminish them. No wonder I looked with gloomy forebodings on the news, and feared that my kind relative, for the remainder of his life, would be exposed to difficulties and distress.

I had nothing now to induce me to remain an hour in Brussels—the tie was broken, the charm dissolved. I procured a private servant, who had lost his master on the 18th — discharged my lodgings at the hotel, packed my kit, and, on the second day after Mr. Harrison's departure for England, set out to rejoin my regiment, which was in the advance of Colville's brigade, and pushing forward direct for Paris.

I quitted the Belgian capital early on the 28th, and once more bent my course through the forest of Soignies, on the road to Waterloo and Genappe. Ten days before, I marched from the city in the van of the splendid brigades of Kempt and Pack; and what a crowd of events had hurried over since that eventful morning! I had fought my first field—I had found my long-estranged relative—I had seen my first love, she who had left a lasting impression on my heart—and I was entering on the busy stage of life again, but with other hopes and altered feelings.

I made a pilgrimage across the field of battle, and my reflections were far from being pleasurable. A ruined plain was now the sole memorial of a glorious victory. I visited each well-remembered spot—each a scene of sanguinary conflict. Although the bodies had been generally interred, war had left his iron traces behind. Here, on this broken ridge, I had lain with my regiment in extended order—farther, to the right, the Cuirassiers had charged us — across the height in front, the duke had led us on in person —and in yonder hollow, where the grain was beaten to the very earth, leaving not a remnant of its luxuriance, the last furious struggle had terminated, and with it the hopes of France were crushed.

But the splendid panorama of the battle-field was wanting: no lines of sparkling infantry, no charging squadrons met the eye; the thunder of the battery, the rolling volley, the sharp fusilade of the rifles, were silent: it was now a wide scene of cold and cheerless desolation; and the narrow theatre, where fifty thousand men and horses breathed their last, had nothing to record the deed of slaughter but trampled fields and ruined husbandry.

I easily made out the spot where I had been wounded, and left among the dead and dying; and the closing act of Waterloo rose in vivid recollection. There the poor youth was murdered, and there the yager was cut down; there I lay in helpless misery, while the guardsman pressed me to the earth; and my deliverers—but where were they?—they had disappeared, unthanked and unrewarded; and even the present to the Belgian peasant was disbursed from the sergeant's plunder.

While I was *hors de combat* at Brussels, the short and brilliant campaign that re-established the Bourbon dynasty in France was hurrying to its close. The allied commanders followed up their decisive victory at Mont Saint Jean, by a forced movement on Paris. The places of strength upon the line of march, were not permitted to impede the operations of the invading army, as they were either carried by assault, or, if too strong, masked and left in the rear.

On the 24th, the British advance was in front of Cambray; and as the town held out, it was attacked by escalade next morning. The gate of Valenciennes, and the adjacent curtain was stormed by the light companies of Johnston's brigade, while the 91st carried the ravelin beside

the road of Amiens; and the gate of Paris being forced by Colonel Mitchel, the place, no longer tenable, fell. Next day Peronne, the virgin fortress, was attacked by the duke in person, and the Guards having carried the horn-work, obliged the garrison to yield.

Meanwhile, Grouchy was executing a masterly retreat upon the capital, and Blucher as promptly following him. On the 28th, the Prussians were attacked at Villers Cotterets; but the French were repulsed with a loss of both cannon and prisoners. On the 29th, the British advanced guard crossed the Oise; the main body followed on the 30th; and on the 1st of July the whole were in position, their right resting on the heights of Rochebourg, and the left on the forest of Bondy.

As the British army advanced, the Prussians, extending to the right, crossed the Seine at Saint Germain; and halted on the 2nd, with their right at Plessis Picquet, their left at Saint Cloud, and the reserve at Versailles.

While the allied forces were converging on Paris, Napoleon had vainly endeavoured to obtain means for opposing them with effect. The French capital was in desperate commotion; and the legislative bodies, instead of calm deliberation, consumed their time in factious recrimination, or in discussing wild and absurd propositions. On one point only there was a union of opinion, and that was, that the emperor should abdicate. He did so on the 22nd; and a provisional government of five having been appointed, despatched plenipotentiaries to treat with the allies for an armistice; and declaring Paris in a state of siege, they concerted measures for its defence, and intrusted the command-in-chief to Marshal Davoust.

On the 29th, while Blucher occupied the strong lines in front of Saint Denis and Vincennes, and Wellington was at Orville, Napoleon left his capital, never to revisit it. After a farewell address to his army he departed for Rochfort. There he had determined to embark for America in a fast-sailing vessel, and take the chance of evading the numerous cruisers that blockaded the port. Circumstances however induced him to abandon his original design, and place himself unconditionally upon the generosity of England. He did so—and would to God! a nobler policy had been adopted than one which consigned him to exile on that barren rock, where the ashes of the conqueror of Europe now repose.

Davoust, on his appointment, divided his army into two corps, and made every arrangement to defend the capital. To one of these corps, the lines between St. Denis and Vincennes, additionally strengthened with heavy iron ordnance, was intrusted; while the other, commanded by Vandamme, was posted at Mont-rouge. Negotiation with the allied commanders was attempted, and failed. The Prussians attacked the heights of Meudon and village of Issy, which, after a gallant resistance, they obtained. To recover the village, the French made a sudden and desperate attack at three o'clock of the morning of the 3rd, but they were repulsed with loss. Paris was laid open on its vulnerable side, a pontoon communication at Argenteuil established between the allied commanders, and a British corps advanced towards Pont de Neuilly. Davoust, justly alarmed, despatched a flag of truce to request the firing at both sides of the Seine might cease, and a military convention be concluded. The overture was acceded to—commissioners from the allied army met those appointed by the provisional government of France, and the "Treaty of Paris" resulted.

According to the terms of the convention, the French troops crossed the Loire, and Paris was surrendered to the conquerors. On the 7th, the city was formally evacuated, and the British and Prussians marched in; and on the 8th, Louis XVIII. entered once more, and was received with apparent indications of popular regard.

The rapid advance of the allies upon Paris was marked by that energy and dash which might be expected from an army flushed with recent victory. A national rivalry stimulated the British and Prussians. Their operations were distinguished by peculiar boldness—and obstacles which in former days would have been considered too serious to overlook, were despised by the daring leaders of the allied forces. No breathing-time was permitted to the beaten enemy—on pressed the allies by forced marches—and before the ruin of Napoleon's army could organize itself anew, the victors were before the gates of Paris; and the prompt determination with which the powerful defences erected to protect the city were reduced, proved that nothing is insurmountable to courage and decision.

In the annals of war, no campaign on record bears any parallel to that of Waterloo—so short, so sanguinary, and so glorious; commencing with the fields of Ligny and Quatre-Bras, and ending with the fall of Paris. A few days saw the master-spirit of the age victorious and overthrown—a conqueror and a captive: and that haughty city, from whence the destinies of Europe had been for years dictated, placed at the mercy of those, over whom she had so long and so imperiously domineered. The spoils of a hundred victories were torn from their place of pride; and he who had denuded every other capital to aggrandise his own was borne on the ocean-wave to close his eventful life in hopeless exile. Were a moral wanting, where could so strong a one be found to point the insecurity of human fortune?

I came up with the rear of the British army, after they crossed the Oise, on the evening of the 30th, and stopped at a small *cabaret* for the night, intending by an early start on the morrow to rejoin my regiment, which was but two marches in advance. As all the surrounding villages were crowded with troops, and the hamlet where I halted was the bivouack of a battalion, my accommodations were humble enough. Fortunately for me, the corps that accupied the place were part of Kempt's brigade, and I had known several of the officers in Brussels. Those quartered at the *Aigle Noir* had established a temporary mess, and, with military courtesy, I, a solitary brother of the sword, was invited to join their rough but hospitable supper-table.

Yet our evening carouse was not so joyous as I had anticipated. The spirits of the company had not that buoyancy which soldiers, when on service, evince. But in course of conversation the cause transpired—that evening a court-martial had been holden upon two soldiers, for a drunken riot in a wine-house, when, in the madness of intoxication, one of them had discharged a

musket at the sergeant-major, who was endeavouring to suppress the quarrel. Both offenders had been tried and found guilty; one was sentenced to receive five hundred lashes, and the other to be shot! An officer had gone off to head-quarters to lay the finding and sentence of the court before the duke; although, from the inflexibility of his character, and the paramount necessity of maintaining rigid discipline in an invading army, no hope of a remission of punishment could be indulged.

The doomed soldier was deeply regretted by his officers: he had served through the Peninsular campaign, and more than once had won and worn the sergeant's stripes. But, though a gallant and intelligent soldier, his dissipated habits, and ferocious temper when intoxicated, had marred his military preferment; and he who had led two forlorn hopes, and distinguished himself gloriously in a dozen battles, was fated to end his career ignominiously, and fill a felon's grave!

CHAPTER XIV.

CONFESSIONS OF A CONDEMNED SOLDIER.

"Darest thou die?"

SHAKESPEARE.

"'Tis morn—and o'er his altered features play
The beams—without the hopes of yesterday.
What shall he be ere night? Perchance a thing
O'er which the raven flaps her funeral wing;
By his closed eye unheeded and unfelt,
While sets that sun, and dews of evening melt."

The Corsair.

IT was late in the evening when the officer returned to the bivouack of the —th. The result was what had been anticipated—the fate of the condemned soldier was sealed. A pardon had been extended to his companion, in consideration of youth, inexperience, and good character; but to the veteran mercy was denied; and the sentence was ordered to be carried into execution next morning, previous to the march, and in the presence of the whole brigade.

That the death of an individual should create any powerful sensation among men hackneyed in bloodshed and accustomed to scenes of slaughter, could not be expected; yet the untimely fate of their brave but erring comrade elicited a general sympathy, In his own regiment, where the doomed one was a favourite, there was exhibited a general regret; and the very man whose life he had attempted, and who escaped murder almost by a miracle, was deeply distressed at having been obliged to appear as prosecutor, and thus become an unwilling agent in bringing his luckless companion to an ignominious end.

I strolled out from the *cabaret;* the village was comparatively quiet, for the crowds of soldiery were rapidly disappearing, as they betook themselves to their respective quarters, seeking for the night the best accommodation they could obtain. I wandered through the mob of red-coats, hoping I might accidentally meet the men that assisted me off the field. Every plate that bore the number of their regiment caused me to examine the wearer; but my researches were vain, and I determined that next day I would see the brigade march, and ascertain whether in the ranks of the —th I could discover either of my deliverers. Accordingly, I turned my steps to the *Aigle Noir*, where, in a garret-room, I had been lucky enough to secure a resting-place for the night.

I was within ten paces of the door, when a soldier stopped and examined me with attention. I paused and looked at him in return, for he belonged to the —th. As I scrutinised his features, I thought the face was not entirely unknown; but all doubt ended when the man addressed me by name, and proved to be Macmanus.

"Ah, Mr. Blake, is it you? God be praised I met you! though I have but bad news to tell. Sergeant Murphy, who helped you off the field, is under sentence of death, and will suffer tomorrow morning at the first light."—"Gracious God! is my preserver that unhappy man? Where is he confined?"

"Hard by," returned the soldier. "There is an old castle at the end of the village, where the main-guard is posted. Oh, how overjoyed he will be to see you before he dies! He has something heavy on his mind that he is anxious to disclose—and has spoken of you frequently, but little thought, poor fellow! that he should lay eyes on you again in this world."—"Show me the way instantly!" and, piloted by Macmanus, I reached the extremity of the hamlet.

An old and deserted chateau was occupied by the pickets of the —th. The soldiery were stationed in a large and ruinous hall, while in an inner apartment the convict was passing the few hours that in this world were allowed him.

The captain of the guard had been of our party at the *Aigle Noir*, and consequently I was known to him. I briefly acquainted him with my wish to visit the condemned soldier; my request was immediately acceded to, and I was conducted to the inner chamber, where, guarded by two sentries, I found the object of my search.

He was sitting on a broken bench, and, by the feeble light of a solitary candle, appeared busily engaged in perusing a book of devotion. His uniform had been taken away, and he was now dressed in his grave-clothes—a slop jacket and trousers without lace or facings. The expression of his features was stern rather than dejected—and there was a lofty and fixed resolution in his look, that befitted better a soldier pondering over some approaching deed of arms, than one on whom the world was closing fast, and who must rest in a dishonoured grave before the next sun should run a quarter of his course.

The silence of my entrance, and the deep absorption of the prisoner in religious exercise, allowed me to observe him for some moments. He was calm and collected, for I saw him turn back the page to connect a passage he was reading. I took another step; he raised his eyes carelessly; but when my dark uniform met his glance, he sprang lightly on his feet, and advanced to the centre of the chamber where I was standing.

"Can it be possible?" he exclaimed in a voice of pleasure mingled with surprise—"Is it the only person on earth that I prayed to see before I died?—Does the son of Cæsar Blake indeed stand before me?"

"I am here, Murphy," I replied, "and deeply distressed to find my preserver in these desperate circumstances. Would that I could breathe a

hope! but it would be cruelty to raise any, where none is left. Murphy, your fate is certain, and you must——"

"Meet it like a man!" returned the convict, firmly. "I can do so, sir," he continued; "death is no bugbear to one who from boyhood has been an outcast, and for eighteen years has had hundreds on his head. Many a scene of blood have I witnessed—in many a deed of violence have I been concerned—death and I are old acquaintances. Did you not fear that the felon's touch would contaminate, feel this hand, and tell me if it trembles?"

He raised his arm—his fingers were pressed on mine—his grasp was firm—his touch not half so feverish as my own.

"I longed, I prayed that accident might bring you hither—my request was heard—my last wish gratified. How goes the night?" he said, sharply.

I looked at my watch—it wanted but a few minutes of twelve.

"Then have I full three hours to live, and one of them I would devote to a private conversation with you. Probably, if you will guarantee my safe custody, and undertake that I shall neither glide through a key-hole, nor vanish up the chimney, Captain Hayley will permit us to remain for that brief space together."

I made his wishes known, and the kind-hearted soldier acceded freely to my request; the sentries were withdrawn and placed outside the door, and orders issued that none should interrupt us; while fresh lights were procured, a flask of wine sent in, and all that a man of feeling could do to ameliorate the numbered minutes of an unhappy sufferer, was done by the commander of the main-guard.

The convict filled a glass and presented it to me. I felt no inclination for wine, and would have willingly declined it—"Take it," he said, with a melancholy smile, "you and I shall never share another bottle, Let Cæsar Blake's son, and Cæsar Blake's avenger, drink to the memory of the departed!"

I started—"And was it by your hand that the murderer of my father perished?"

The condemned soldier paused for a moment, then in a cold low voice replied—"The hand that slew the slayer, will never do a deed of death again. Yes, boy, thy father was well and speedily revenged."

"And does not that deed of violence press on your conscience now?"

The convict's brow flushed. "No!" he exclaimed, "that was an act of justice! Pshaw! would I had no heavier care—it costs me not a thought more than the slaughter of that roaming plunderer, whom I cut down upon the field of battle. There was nobler blood upon this hand before it played the executioner, and avenged a murder which the law could never reach. Come, sir, drink—I have other and tenderer recollections pressing heavily on these brief minutes. The living, and not the dead, disturbs my closing hour. I have a request to make—a promise to exact. Will Cæsar Blake's son grant a parting favour to the avenger of his parent?"

"Yes, Murphy; aught that I can do in honour, shall be done—your wishes?"

"I thank you, sir, I will be brief. This bench will hold us both." He motioned me to sit down—I obeyed; while, filling a cup of wine, he raised it steadily to his lips. "The last pledge of a dying man is yours," he said—"May you be fortunate and happy!" He drank the glass to the bottom, replaced it on the floor, and seated himself beside me.

It was a scene that shall never leave my memory. The large and desolate apartment—the feeble and unsteady light—the melancholy hour—all was dreary and depressing; while in my companion I had avowedly a man of blood—one that in a brief space was to become a tenant of the grave, and food for worms. It seemed a fearful dream, and not reality—I was nervous, dispirited, uncomfortable, and wished some other living thing was in the room, or that morning had broken.

Just then a loud irregular tapping was heard at intervals. In the silence of night, when one labours under anxiety or alarm, sounds fall quickly and painfully upon the ear—I listened, and the convict noticed it.

"Know you what noise that is?" he asked carelessly.

I answered in the negative.

"It is my shell they are knocking up—and while the hero sleeps upon the field, without a rag around his corpse to fence it for a little from the worms, the convict will be treated to a coffin! Well, it adds to the mummery of death; it has its effect on feeble minds, and serves good purposes. But surely the village was large enough to afford some place to nail those boards together, without letting the intended occupant hear the progress of the work. No matter—it will no doubt be but a rough job, and the more speedily completed—and now listen to me."

He paused, trimmed the candles which had been unregarded, appeared to collect his thoughts, and thus proceeded:—

"I have neither time nor inclination to dwell upon details of earlier life, and my story is simply told. From boyhood I have been proscribed, for before the beard blackened on my face, I was a homicide. I have been the companion of outcasts and murderers—now dissipating in reckless profusion, and now without a roof to shelter me, or a draught of water to cool my burning lips. I have roamed, a leader of banditti—I have headed a band of heroes to the breach—I have marched for days without a biscuit or a shoe—I have revelled in the arms of high-born beauty, while exercising that horrible licence which military usage subjects a stormed city to undergo. Every scene and situation that could steel the bosom and demonise the heart have been to me familiar—and yet one gentle hour in the whirlwind career of this fearful life—one guiltless recollection, saddens with painful thought the fleeting moments I am allotted.

"Three years elapsed after your father's death before I found it necessary to quit my haunts in Connemara. During that period most of my companions had been apprehended, and with loss of life satisfied offended justice, and I had many a 'hair-breadth 'scape.' As the laws became generally operative, the time came when I must seek some safer retreat. I decided on going to the Continent and entering a foreign service, and soon found an opportunity to quit my native country in a smuggling lugger.

"We landed safely at Flushing. The reckless life of a sea adventurer was best suited to the

fancy of a desperate man like me. Although not a sailor, I had found favour in the skipper's sight. With the commander of the 'Fly-by-Night' I entered as supercargo, and with a full hold and daring crew we started for the shores of England.

"It was thick and snowy weather when we made the Kentish coast. Favoured by the fog, we ran safely through the Channel, and evaded its numerous cruisers. The lead-line told us we were immediately off our destination, although no land-marks were visible. We burned a blue light to apprise our friends that we were in the offing—a fire on shore answered it—and that fire betrayed us.

"A cruiser had unluckily hove-to in the fog-bank not a mile from where we lay. She noticed the signal—suspected it to be that of an enemy or smuggler—manned her boats—sent them off silently—they rowed with muffled oars, and before we even suspected danger, we were boarded and carried in an instant. I and some others fought, but the rest ran below, when the first gang of men-of-war's men jumped into the chains of the lugger. We were fairly forced overboard. Every man was left to his fortune—all struck out different ways—most of them, from the thickness of the weather, swam out to sea; and of a dozen driven over the lugger's bulwarks, none reached the land but me.

"It was a wild and uninhabited part of the country where I came on shore, bruised in the struggle on the vessel's deck, and chilled by remaining so long in the water. I looked round for some place where I might obtain rest and refreshment, but through the dense haze not a light sparkled from a casement, to tell that a human habitation was near. It was late in the evening when the smuggler was surprised and captured, and if night found me chilled and exhausted on this wild beach, morning would dawn upon me a corpse. To make an instant effort—to discover, if possible, some place to shelter me, was the sole chance left of preserving life. I crawled with difficulty across the loose shingle, and directed my course inland.

"I dragged myself feebly on for half an hour; momentarily my remaining strength abated—I became weaker and weaker—no house appeared—nature was exhausted—and nothing remained but to lie down and die.

"Just then the baying of a dog, and that at no great distance, fell like music on my ear. I roused my subdued spirit, and taxed my expiring energies to their utmost—the last exertion was successful; my tottering limbs brought me to a cottage door, I gave a feeble knock, and sank upon the threshold insensible.

"I recollect nothing more until after my recovery, when I found myself supported before a blazing fire by an elderly man, whose wife and daughter were chafing my powerless limbs, and moistening my bloodless lips with brandy. I was speedily restored. Would I had perished in the lugger or the sea, for where I entered death and misery came!

"It was a simple and a happy family that succoured me—alas! I rendered them soon superlatively wretched! Yet, God knows! never did man more devoutly intend reforming, or love a wife with more fidelity and tenderness, than I loved that old man's daughter.

"Lillias was beautiful, artless, and warm-hearted—I was in the prime of manhood, and—is it vanity for the dying to say so?—exceedingly handsome. I told a well-arranged story of my being impressed, of having taken advantage of a fog to quit the ship and swim ashore; and on a coast where all were seafaring men or smugglers, my tale was freely credited, and I welcomed as an ill-used personage and bold adventurer. The old man, my host, had been himself engaged in contraband trade, had saved some money, and now in the evening of his life enjoying the reward of 'days of toil and nights of danger.' His daughter was reputed among the fishermen and farmers to be an heiress, and many a suitor came to old Hanway's cottage—but I carried off the prize, and wedded Lillias. My success no doubt annoyed many a rival, but they were generous; and all save one forgave, and wished me happiness.

"He was a half-born gentleman, the illegitimate offspring of the squire by the daughter of a favourite gamekeeper. Among the peasantry, he assumed in right of descent, a ridiculous superiority; he felt his dignity compromised by my success, and treasured the imaginary injury, until he could revenge it upon a man whom he equally feared and hated.

"It was remarked that, for one who swam so well, I seldom bathed, and when I did, it was at some untimely hour, or unfrequented place. Unknown to me, curiosity was powerfully excited; I was watched, and the secret discovered; for a flogging I received at Bristol for desertion had left indelible traces of the cat upon my back, and I bore upon my person a damning evidence of former crime and former punishment.

"Nine months elapsed; a child was promised; Lillias was overjoyed, and looked with impatience for the time when she should be made a mother; while old Hanway declared that he should be the happiest man alive. The hour of trial came—the nurse was summoned and the doctor sent for. It was past midnight, and all in the cottage was hurry and expectation.

"I was pacing the lower apartment in some anxiety, for the physician had not yet arrived; I heard a noise without; no doubt it was the expected one. There was a trampling of feet; more than one or two were there. I looked from the casement; the house was surrounded by soldiers!

"What could it mean? Were they seeking for illicit goods, or searching after smugglers? I opened the door; a non-commissioned officer and half-a-dozen files stepped in, asked me my name, and told me I was a prisoner; and, before I had time to ask a question, I was handcuffed and hurried off. Vain were my entreaties to be permitted to bid poor Lillias farewell. The soldiers were obdurate, and not a moment's delay was granted; for Fenwick, the scoundrel who had denounced me as a deserter, represented me as a daring and desperate man, whom, unless surprised and secured, it would occasion loss of life to overpower.

"I was marched eight miles before the dawn appeared, when the escort, who were much fatigued, halted at an obscure alehouse for refreshment. They conducted me into the parlour, and my handcuffs were removed, when a young fisherman, who had been always attached to me, entered and requested leave to speak to the prisoner.

"I rose and approached an open window, where a couple of the guard were smoking. I examined the countenance of my friend; it was clouded with sorrow, and I feared to ask a question. He appeared exhausted by rapid travelling, and unwilling to communicate some disastrous matter. At last, I mustered courage and pressed him to tell the worst. He did so; Lillias had given birth to a boy, and, having unfortunately heard of my apprehension, became so dreadfully convulsed that her death was momentarily expected.

"I stood some moments like a statue; the excess of misery stupefied me, and I was unconscious of what passed around, until a movement of the soldiers, preparatory to resuming their march, roused me. One of them advanced, and proceeded to replace the handcuffs. Suddenly my self-possession returned; I threw the man aside, sprang through the open casement, and, like a deer, bounded across the wild common which surrounded the alehouse. The guard, astonished by the desperate attempt, were for a few moments undecided: some ran out to follow me; the sergeant desired them to fire: some discharged their muskets from the window, others kept up a spattering fusilade from below; but not a bullet touched me, and in a few minutes my few followers were left so far behind, that they abandoned the pursuit in despair."

I was listening in deep attention, when the door unclosed, and the sergeant of the guard announced that the old *curé* was waiting outside to administer the last consolations of religion to the ill-starred soldier. The intelligence appeared to gratify Murphy, and he requested to be left for a few minutes alone with me, and then he should be ready to receive the confessor.

"Time flies, and I must hurry. In an incredibly short space I reached my home; I rushed into the cabin, and a cry of horror burst from the assembled crowd—Lillias was dead! I flew past those who would have withheld me, climbed the stairs, entered the chamber of death, and satisfied myself that the being in whom the whole affections of a withered heart had centred, was gone! I remember little more. For two or three hours I lay beside the corpse, till I was removed by force, and placed on board a boat, only in time to evade a military party that had been despatched to retake me. The mournful pleasure of following the remains of Lillias to the grave was denied. I was driven like a wolf from the home where I had found the only happiness my wretched lot permitted, and forced by the hand of destiny to plunge anew into fresh scenes of violence and bloodshed.

"And now for my request. The child of Lillias lives, and I had prepared to return and claim him, so soon as I could procure a discharge. Find him out—here are sufficient directions—and, in this belt, the spoil of many a battle-field that I hoarded for my boy." He gave me tablets, and a sort of girdle, which he unbuckled from beneath his jacket—"Will you protect the orphan?—and when you think of Waterloo, remember that he who fills a felon's grave loved to the last the son of his early benefactor. Ha! the dawn is breaking; see how the grey light is stealing through the lattice! Where, when he rises to-morrow, shall I be?—In that lonely place, where spirits like mine alone can hope for quiet! Farewell! earthly cares and earthly thoughts are over. I have one favour to ask—see me die; but see me at a distance. Mine must be the bearing of a soldier, and your appearance might recall the past, and shake my firmness." Then, with a quick step, he crossed the chamber, and knocked: the door opened, and the aged priest came in: "God bless you, son of Cæsar Blake! Farewell—*remember!*" He wrung my hand—I hurried out—and the churchman and the convict were left together.

* * * * * *
* * * * * *

The sun had topped the summit of the distant forest, and shone gloriously upon the glittering ranks of the brigade, as it filed from its cantonments to the plain without the village, and formed three sides of a square, facing inwards. In the centre of the unoccupied space a grave was dug, and a rude shell laid beside it. I stood on the left of the line, and was quite near enough to witness the melancholy spectacle. Presently the firing-party marched from the centre, and halted with ordered arms within twelve paces of the grave. The Provost's guard followed immediately; and the tall commanding figure of the doomed soldier was seen approaching. His carriage was erect—his shoulders thrown nobly back—his step firm, and measured with military accuracy. I had placed myself on the flank of his own regiment; and, when I looked along the line, every cheek was wet, and every lip seemed to invoke a blessing on the sufferer. The escort halted at the grave, placed the condemned one beside his coffin, and then fell back behind the firing-party. None but the Provost-marshal remained, and he appeared anxious to blindfold the convict, which was by the latter indignantly rejected. This detested functionary then handed the dying soldier a handkerchief, and fell back beside his companions.

An awful pause—a dead silence followed. The convict, drawn up to his full height, fixed his foot firmly, and, in a voice so clear and calm that it was heard in the centre of the brigade, ordered his comrades to "shoulder!" One hand was placed across his breast—the other held the signal. In a lower tone, and with a quickness that showed him anxious to shorten the ceremony, he gave the brief commands that followed; and what they were might be inferred from the motions of the firing-party. The muskets came to the recover—to the present—the signal fell—a volley answered it—and, perforated by half a dozen bullets, the gallant criminal did not carry life to the ground.

To place the body in the coffin, and cover it scantily with earth, was the work of a few minutes. The bugles sounded—the word was given—the brigade marched; and, filing off by their flanks, the different regiments took the road to Paris.

CHAPTER XV.

PROMOTION.—VISIT TO MY GRANDFATHER.

"He has an unforgiving eye, and a damn'd disinheriting countenance."

School for Scandal.

"Why, how now? what does Master Fenton here?
You wrong me, sir, thus still to haunt my house:
I told you, sir, my daughter is dispos'd of."

Merry Wives of Windsor.

PARIS opened its gates to the conquerors, and the glorious campaign of '15 terminated. An army of occupation, according to treaty, was cantoned around the capital, or quartered in the towns which afforded the best means of furnishing the commissariat with supplies. War "smooth'd his wrinkled front;"

"Our stern alarums were changed to merry meetings,
And dreadful marches to delightful measures;"

and the victors of Waterloo enjoyed a luxurious repose, enlivened occasionally by military spectacles and splendid *fêtes*.

Three years passed. I entered "beautiful France" a boy; I left it a man. At stated intervals I had written to my grandfather, and in due course received punctilious replies. With his approbation I corresponded also with my pretty cousin, and her letters were *naïve* and affectionate. My interests appeared to be attended to; for in the autumn of '18 I was promoted to a company, and transferred from the Rifles to the —— Fusileers.

Yet it struck me as being extraordinary, that my new patron had never expressed a wish to see me in England; and more than one overture to a visit was unnoticed or evaded. He was a strange personage: it was dangerous to force myself upon him uninvited: and better far to acquiesce in his arrangements and submit to his caprice. In this resolution I was confirmed by the counsel of my kind friend Phœbe. She wrote to me occasionally; exhorted me to patience; assured me that I was not forgotten by the gentle Emily; and hinted that the time was not remote, when I should be summoned to Stainsbury Park, an honoured and a welcome guest.

The regiment to which I had been promoted was quartered in Scotland, and I bade my companions in arms farewell; started without delay for Calais; and, after a three years' absence, rolled over the stones of the metropolis in the Dover mail, and established myself in Berners-street.

During the last year I had heard less frequently from Ireland than formerly. By the latest accounts, I learned that my uncle had become more embarrassed; my aunt more religious; the confessor gone the way of all flesh; while my kinsman with the evil by-name, was "starring it" at garrison plays, figuring in "the Fifteen Acres,"* and riding for hunters' plates on the Curragh of Kildare,—and in all these feats he had greatly distinguished himself, if there was faith in newspapers. Indeed, judging from the limited information that had reached me, affairs in Connaught were blank enough: the pack had been broken up, the stud disposed of, and Manus Blake's excursions from home abridged to half-yearly visits to the ancient town of Galway, where his person was secure from arrest by a summons to attend upon the grand panel of the county. It appeared farther, that Mother Casey was his chief persecutor; that daily she became more formidable as a creditor; and, since a receiver she had placed upon the property had been shot at, she was deaf to every effort of accommodation. Jack's embassy to Dublin, to appease the irritated dowager, had failed; and indeed a worse mediator could not have been selected. He had commenced by horsewhipping Sharpe and Sweepall in their own office; and, of course, had been brought into the King's Bench for the same. With this exploit, all attempts to reconcile Mother Casey had terminated: the relict of the defunct tailor was exasperated by the assault upon her attorneys-at-law, and Castle Blake declared by the sheriff in a state of siege; while Jack the Devil was figuring in genteel comedy at Fisham-ble-street, and practising at country gentlemen in the park.

I might have gone directly to Ireland, had any interference of mine been useful, but as that was questionable, I determined to wait for answers to letters which, upon my arrival in town, I had despatched to my uncle and his son.

Indeed, a plea was easily found for remaining in England—Emily was near me, and I resolved to see her. The impression made upon my boyish heart at Brussels had ripened into an enduring passion, and the gentle girl engrossed my every thought. Surely there could be no objection to renew our intimacy now? I had conformed to my relative's wishes, and obeyed her eccentric guardian implicitly. That I was here, was his act; for, by obtaining my promotion, he brought me home from service. What course was I to pursue? Should I write to him? No: he might refuse my request, and inhibit my visits. Should I inquire at his banker's or lawyer's? That, too, was dangerous; in expectation of my doing so, orders might be waiting for me there. After much deliberation, I decided on calling at his house. If honourably received, well:—if not, the chances were in favour of my seeing my fair mistress; or I would meet Phœbe, and leave the rest to fortune.

With a beating heart, I threw myself into a coach, and was driven to Baker-street. I stopped at the well-remembered door; but the house was closed, and an escutcheon between the front windows announced that the owner was no more. I sprang from the carriage. Was Mr. Harrison dead? I glanced over the quarterings of the shield; the arms were those of a stranger. A gentleman entering the next house observed me; and I learned from him that my grandfather had left town a year before; and disposed of the mansion to the late proprietor. What was to be done? Instantly my resolution was taken; and that was, to start for Stainsbury without delay. Accordingly I drove to Berners-street; packed a light portmanteau; left my luggage at the hotel; and departed in the mail that passed within a few miles of my grandfather's residence.

My journey down was unattended with adventure. Daylight found me at a village inn, at no great distance from the place of my destination; and I retired to bed for a few hours, although the uncertainty of my reception at the hall prevented me from sleeping. Soon after breakfast, I procured a postchaise from the next

* A portion of the Phœnix Park, where affairs of honour are generally decided.

town ; and a short drive brought me to the old and time-worn gate, which had witnessed my ill-starred mother's departure from her paternal home, a mourning bride and repudiated daughter.

I never felt before the nervousness that now beset me, as the carriage swept beneath rows of elms, the growth of two centuries at least. The day was cold and foggy ; the mansion had a neglected look ; the grounds were indifferently kept ; and there was a total want of the care and cleanliness around, that the park of an English gentleman so generally exhibits. As we passed the windows, my eyes in vain searched for the form I loved ; no female was visible ; no bustling footman appeared ; but, in a large and gloomy room, I observed a solitary personage seated beside the fire in a high-backed chair, and in him I easily recognised the arbiter of my fortunes and the owner of the mansion.

An old servant answered the bell, took my card and left me standing in the hall. I examined the ancient portraits that hung suspended from the walls, and fancied that every face was frowning on me. Sterner features than those my maternal ancestors presented, were never transferred to canvas by a painter. A distant footstep sounded ; the rustling of a silken dress was heard ; my heart beat faster ; my cheeks flushed : was it Emily? On she came. Pshaw ! a grey-haired housekeeper crossed the hall : I bit my lips in vexation. Presently the attendant returned, bowed low, and desired me to follow him.

The chamber into which he introduced me was lofty and well-proportioned, and once had been expensively furnished ; but, like things out of doors, it bore traces of neglect. Books were displaced upon the shelves, or strewn upon the carpet ; and parchments and papers lay in disorder on the tables. A large Indian screen concealed the fireplace, and protected the person seated there from the draughts of opening doors. Thither the attendant directed me to proceed ; bowed respectfully, and took his departure.

I advanced, and found myself in the presence of my grandfather. If possible, he looked more formidable than when he appeared to me for the first time in our unexpected interview at Brussels. He stared, started convulsively, passed his hands across his eyes, and muttered, "God ! how like his unfortunate father !" A long distressing silence ensued, and with a desperate effort I broke it.

"I came here, sir, to pay my duty : and thank you for my company in the Fusileers."

He peered suspiciously at me through the opening of the hand that shaded his eyes, and then cautiously presented me with the other : I pressed it. He motioned me to sit down, and was soon sufficiently composed to speak with freedom.

Three years had wrought a wondrous change. Mr. Harrison was sadly altered : the thin, sinewy old man, that spectre-like had crossed me in Emily's boudoir in Brussels, was now worn to a shadow by years of suffering, if appearances were true. Still the bright blue eye glanced keenly from beneath its grizzled penthouse ; and, though the frame was sinking fast, the spirit was firm, determined, and unbending, as when he drove my mother from his door. His address confounded me.

"I expected that this mark of respect would have been shown to me a week ago ; but Moulsey Hurst had more claims upon you, it would seem, than the owner of the house of Stainsbury."

I looked astonishment.

"A week ago, sir? you surprise me. To pay my duty to you earlier was impossible."

"Indeed ! yet you could find leisure to patronise a gang of scoundrels, that all but the lowest have abandoned. Your success was but indifferent." He looked at me steadily ; and directed my attention to an article in a morning paper, headed "Sporting Intelligence." It ran thus :

"The recent *cross* at Moulsey should open the eyes of all to the villany of pugilists. The worthlessness of 'the Fancy' has become proverbial, and the uncertainty of a *come-off* becomes every day more notorious. From the commencement of the battle, it was quite evident that *the Jew* had no intention to win ; and the greenest victim clearly perceived it to be a regular *throw-over*. Among sundry soft gentlemen who suffered on the recent occasion, one fresh landed from the Emerald Isle came down to a high figure. Captain Blake has discovered that there are sharper *riflemen* than himself. We trust, however, that the fair *figurante* in Curzon-street will solace his disappointments on the heath."

I was astounded.

"This is indeed unaccountable. I left Paris two days after the affair in question."—"Very surprising," said the old man, drily.

"It is nevertheless true, sir. The coincidence in name, and the allusion to my late regiment, are indeed remarkable."—"I believe your assertion :" and I fancied that a shade of benignity appeared upon his marble-looking face. "And when did you arrive from France?"

"But yesterday. I called at Baker-street, found you were absent, and lost no time in seeking you here."—"I am glad you did so," said my grandsire ; "and yet this unexpected coming precipitates matters. Sit down ; I have much to say, and something to require from you."

"Anything, sir, in which your pleasure is concerned, must be to me a duty."—"Umph ! fairly promised, boy. Then you will obey my wishes?"

"Certainly, sir, to any reasonable extent."—"Ha !" said the old man, sharply ; "duty with you is conditional ; and you will oblige me, provided my request is quite agreeable to yourself. Come, then ; listen to me."

He waved me to sit down. I did so ; and he continued.

"I shall detain you a little, for I must speak of times and persons that are gone. I had in early life a fond and attached companion : at school and college we lived together, and manhood confirmed a friendship which death alone dissolved.

"Sedley, as my friend was called, was in holy orders, and a widower, with one son. Had he lived, professional advancement would have rewarded his virtues and acquirements : but it was otherwise ordained.

"He was attacked with a disease, lingering, but fatal. In the early stage of it I had him removed to this house, and here he continued till the close. I was constant in my attendance, and in every alternation of his sufferings I was beside his bed.

"Perfectly aware that his malady—an affection of the heart—was incurable, Sedley waited for

the inevitable event with philosophic calmness and Christian resignation. One thing alone disturbed him,—the natural anxiety a parent feels when he leaves an unprovided for offspring.

"My adopted daughter was then a child: she wandered occasionally into the chamber of my dying friend, and her prattle at times amused him. Once, when speaking of the similar destitution of Emily and his own boy, he consigned the latter to my care. 'Would that the orphan children were destined for each other, and that their future fortunes should be united,' said the expiring father. I saw the hand of death was on him. 'And is this your wish?' I inquired anxiously. He could not speak, for life was parting: he feebly pressed my hand, smiled, and expired. Beside the bed of death I pledged my faith that his request should be obeyed; swore that the fortunes of the bereaved children should be the same; and that if they lived, they should be united."

I started: a deadly paleness covered my face; and with difficulty I suppressed an exclamation that would have betrayed my feelings. However, I subdued my astonishment; and my agitation was unmarked, for my grandfather coldly continued his detail, as if he spoke of the most ordinary occurrence.

"George Sedley is ten years your senior: he is a barrister; and, from steady and business-like habits, will most probably be successful in his profession. He, of course, knows my intentions respecting Emily; but she is totally unacquainted with the destiny that awaits her.

"In providing amply for my wards I have done you no injustice. What I have allotted for Emily's dower is property realized by myself; and if you give me no cause to change the opinion I have formed of you, the estates your mother should have inherited, had she not forgotten her parent and her duty, shall, when my brief career ends, descend to her son.

"I have been thus explicit, as you may have taxed me with unkindness and apparent neglect in never inviting you to visit me here. *You* know I have had good reason to be cautious—Emily is another's; ay! sacredly, as if her vows were plighted to Sedley at the altar. Yet he is not likely to win her affections, if younger and showier persons were placed before her. His are mental recommendations, for in exterior advantages Nature has not been bountiful. Have I sufficiently acquainted you with what is designed for Emily?" He turned his keen blue eye upon me, and I nodded in affirmative. "All now is ripe for final settlement; Emily has completed her twentieth year; my will is made; my properties disposed of. One thing alone is wanting to complete arrangements which have cost me much trouble and deep consideration: and that is, Emily's acceptance of Sedley for a husband. There I dread to meet with opposition: and you must prepare her to accept addresses which the forms of society require to be made. The thing is but a form; Sedley is virtually her husband, for at his parent's death-bed that union was concluded. This done, another claims her duty, and I lose her. God knows how much the sacrifice will cost me—how much to part with her will grieve me. But it shall be done: my pledge to the dead must be redeemed, and the promise made to the friend of my youth realised to the letter. One thing more: when that event occurs, you shall leave the army. One stay of declining life will have been removed, and another shall replace it; and here you will, I hope, remain a guest, where in a few brief months you may be master."

I was thunderstruck at this extraordinary disclosure, and made more than one effort to decline the unwelcome office he had assigned me. He misconceived me: "Come, you would thank me; but I hate professions, even when sincere; and I do not doubt you. Dispense with any expression of your gratitude. I am ill—agitated. I recalled thoughts that pained me. Leave me: we shall meet at dinner. Emily is in the drawing-room. Ring the bell. Go to her; and break the matter cautiously."

I rose to obey him: his searching eye scanned me from head to foot, and rested on the rich braiding of my undress frock. Dark suspicions appeared to cross his mind, as he muttered,—"You are young; Emily is beautiful. Beware, boy! *remember she is another's!* and, as you value my favour, execute my orders faithfully. One word more: I threw a daughter off that disobeyed me; would I then spare the grandchild if he played me false!"

The servant answered the bell; Mr. Harrison told him to conduct me to Miss Clifden; and then, as if exhausted by our interview, threw himself languidly back, while I proceeded on my mission.

I paused in the hall apparently to examine the portraits; but in reality I wished to gain time to recover my self-possession, and prepare for the coming scene. "Oh, that I may find her altered!" I murmured. "If years have matured those charms that blossomed with such promise, I am totally undone!"

Mustering a desperate resolution, I desired the attendant to lead on; and hastened to Emily's presence, not to win beauty for myself, but woo it for a stranger.

CHAPTER XVI.

EMBASSY TO MY COUSIN.—MR. HARRISON.

"And yet the worst of it is, I doubt I love her; but I am determined never to be weak enough to let her know it."

School for Scandal.

WE turned down a gallery leading to the apartment that Miss Clifden had chosen for her own occupation. The attendant asked by what name I should be announced; but I declined his services, and he departed accordingly.

Never did I find myself less a hero than when standing irresolutely before the door of Emily's chamber. The courage I had been screwing up for the interview with my cousin had vanished; and I felt with Acres, that "valour will come and go." Yet to linger where I stood was unmanly; and nervous as a school-girl when she opens her first *billet-doux*, I sought the presence of the only woman upon earth that I was prohibited from loving.

She was alone: her face turned attentively on a drawing which she copied, and unconscious that any but a servant had entered, she did not raise her eyes from the picture until I had ap-

proached the table. When she did look up the sweetest countenance that ever ruined an Irishman met my gaze! She sprang forward with a cry of pleasure and astonishment to bid me welcome; while I, oblivious of the pains and penalties so recently denounced against disobedience of orders, caught her to my breast; and while my lips pressed hers, warnings were flung to the winds, and the whole purpose of my embassy forgotten.

Never did an elderly gentleman employ a more unworthy advocate. An hour passed; the time-piece struck a second, and Sedley's name had not been mentioned. Our conversation was unreserved and affectionate—but then a little warmth was permissible between relatives who, after a long absence, had met so unexpectedly. More than once I was about to throw myself at Emily's feet, and avow my cherished passion; but the dread of the stern old man who ruled our destinies deterred me: and though in my own person I might have risked his displeasure, I trembled when I recollected what my mother had endured, and dreaded to involve one whom I loved so well, in a similar ruin to that which had fallen on my unfortunate parent.

Time was passing quickly, and ere long an account of my embassage must be rendered. I tried repeatedly to introduce the business of my interview, but failed; and in the attempt, the name of Sedley seemed to choke me when I strove to give it utterance.

"Emily," I said, while I fixed my eyes inquisitively upon the beautiful face that a playful observation had brightened with a smile; "Emily, you have had a visitor frequently here. How comes it that you never mentioned him in your letters?"—"A visitor! whom do you mean?—the doctor or the parson?"

"Neither, my sweet cousin. A gayer personage far."—"You puzzle me."

"Indeed?"—"Indeed you do. I know of none besides the persons I have named."

"What, none other, Emily? Have you forgotten the lawyer?"—"Do you mean Mr. Sedley, my father's ward?"

"Yes; he is the man."—"Do you know him, Blake?"

"I do not. Pray, what sort of person is he?" "Oh, a very good, civil kind of gentleman. He sends me harp-strings when I require them; and buys me drawing-paper, and new music. Indeed, he is very obliging: but——" and she paused.

"What, dear Emily?"—"He is——" another pause.

"Go on."—"So very ugly, poor man."

"Now, Heaven be praised!" I exclaimed.

"For what?"—"For making that confounded lawyer such a fright."

She laughed. "I never heard Providence thanked before for afflicting a poor gentleman with the small-pox. But wherefore so particular in your inquiries?"—"I have reason, Emily; and you are likely to know more of this person than you imagine now."

"What do you mean?" she inquired with apparent carelessness. "Is Mr. Sedley invited here?"—"I believe so."

"Then shall we have a new visitor?"—"Or rather a new suitor."

Her face betrayed alarm and astonishment, while the colour rose upon her cheeks, as she fixed her intelligent eyes on mine.

"A suitor! you jest with me."—"Ay, Emily, a suitor, and one, too, that will be sanctioned by my grandfather."

I never saw horror so strongly marked as that apparent upon Emily's expressive features, when I repeated my conversation with Mr. Harrison, and assured her that Sedley was an affianced husband.

"And was there none," she said reproachfully, "but you to harbinger such tidings? Ay! now I understand why every trifle I obtained from London was forwarded by him.—Marry Sedley!" and she sprang from the sofa we were seated on. "No human power should force me to do an act from which my heart recoils! Blake, I love you as a brother; will you not advise, will you not assist me? I am desolate and unprotected;—the creature of your grandsire's bounty,—depending on his will, and loved by no one but himself. Heaven knows how deep my gratitude has been—how entirely and dutifully I revere him; but never,"—and her brows reddened—"never shall I plight obedience to a being I would loathe; or at the altar of my God avow love I never felt or ever could feel!"

All my good resolutions vanished, and prudence was insufficient to restrain me from clasping Emily to my heart and sacrificing all to love.

"Emily!" I cried, "dearer far than ever sister was, never did I feel my poverty till now. Will you not, then, consider worldly wealth? Will you not obey the mandate of your guardian?"

My voice, raised above its customary pitch, prevented me from hearing the door open; and, to my desperate consternation, Mr. Harrison himself was standing at my side.

"It is all over!" thought I; "and now comes notice to quit."

But fortune had befriended me: my grandfather heard nothing but the last sentence—misunderstood my passionate appeal, and thought I urged the suit of my detested rival.

"Thanks, boy!" he muttered; "your arguments are powerful and true; I did not misplace my confidence. Now leave the rest to me. Go—dinner will soon be ready; and I would talk for a few moments with your cousin."

I stole a glance at her: had I doubted her resolution, the look that answered mine would have confirmed me. The old man threw himself upon the sofa, signed that Emily should sit down, and I left them together.

I was conducted to my dressing-room, and there found leisure to reflect upon the singular occurrences that marked my first visit to my grandfather. I loved—deeply and passionately loved!—the die was cast, and if Emily was to be another's, then was I indeed wretched! I was heir to all around me; this mansion and its wide domain was mine; and yet a more miserable man did not exist. What were all these? Probably I was happier without them;—I, the member of an honourable profession, well advanced in it for my time of life, and sufficiently independent to exist without the bounty of any one. Was there ever anything so provoking as the old man's folly!—betrothing infants, and, through a silly observance of a sillier vow, determining to render the being he loved best the most miserable woman in existence. What was to be done!—nothing

but denounce the absurdity of the attempt, and boldly expostulate with him on its cruelty.

Emily!—oh, how my pulse throbbed when I thought of it!—*Emily loved me!* And should she be sacrificed? Oh, no! I would follow my father's example,—spurn every barrier to our happiness, and save her from misery!

Half an hour passed: a bell sounded over the building; a servant tapped at the door, and told me that dinner was served.

I found the old man already in the parlour. The table had three covers; but Emily was absent. "Sit down, John;"—it was the first time he called me by that name;—"we must dine alone, for Miss Clifden is indisposed."

Our meal passed gloomily—my grandfather did not eat, and I was anxious for the servants to withdraw. At last the time arrived; dried fruits were placed upon the table, claret and burgundy laid down, and Mr. Harrison and myself left *tête-à-tête*.

"Come," said the old man, "fill your glass, and drink precisely as you would if among your military companions. My days for joviality are gone; but there is a well-stocked cellar here, and you have only to ask for any wine you choose."

I thanked him, and noticed with regret Miss Clifden's absence. He sighed heavily.

"Yes, I anticipated what the result proved; and for the first time Emily and I have parted in anger."

"Impossible, my dear sir. Trifling difficulties will be smoothed away. How has she offended you?"—"By thwarting the object nearest to my heart. Heaven knows, I once thought the arrow which would wound me deepest could never come from that quiver."

"But, sir, the suddenness of the communication may have occasioned this apparent opposition to your wishes."—"No, no; her resolution seems fixed and matured; and my last hours promise to be embittered by her obstinacy. Had you, John, but known the sterling worth of the man she has declined, you would readily comprehend how deeply the disappointment annoys me. Will you make another effort,—point out her best interests, and remind her of her duty?"

What could I do? To dissimulate was unpardonable—and I ventured to plead her right of free choice.

"Pshaw!" said the old man testily, "all this is moonshine, boy! Sedley is prudent, steady, and old enough to direct her; and his she shall be! In the chamber above the place we sit in, I promised to his dying father that she should marry none but him. That vow is sacred; and, were she dearer to me than she is, my will must be obeyed, or Emily no more be mine! Go—try your influence; I am weary, nervous, and must to my chamber. Press expediency upon her—show her where her true interest lies—and in the morning acquaint me of her decision."

He pointed to the bell-rope; I rang, and his servant answered it. The old man shook my hand; bade me "Good night;" told me to remember that this was my future home: and then, assisted by his old attendant, quitted the room and left me to myself.

My resolution was promptly taken;—to see Emily—avow my passion—and, if the old man persevered in his absurd intentions, release her from his thrall, and take her to myself! The world surely was large enough: in circumstances we were sufficiently independent: of love we should have a large stock,—and love was everything. I fortified myself with "a stoup of burgundy," and sought the chamber of my lovely cousin, to confirm her in disobedience, and offer my hand and heart!

CHAPTER XVII.

MEETING WITH PHŒBE.—MUSIC.—LOVE.—A FLOWER-GARDEN, AND A DISCOVERY.

"But had not thine own lips declared
How much of that young heart I shared,
I could not, must not, yet have shown
The darker secret of my own."

BYRON.

"*Lydia.* How persuasive are his words, how charming will poverty be with him.

Capt. By heavens! I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to my bosom, and say, The world affords no smile to me but here.

Lydia.—Now could I fly with him to the Antipodes."

The Rivals.

IT would appear that Mr. Harrison had conducted his *tête-à-tête* with far less temper than I had anticipated: Emily had retired in tears to her own chamber, and the drawing-room was deserted for the evening.

While coffee was being removed, Miss Clifden's maid brought me a billet from her mistress. I broke the seal hastily, and found a few hurried lines, excusing herself, under the plea of indisposition, from coming down, but hoping we should meet at breakfast.

From the attendant I discovered that the recent interview had been a painful scene to Emily and her guardian, and that both were much agitated when it terminated. Susan lingered in the room, apparently searching for something on the music-stand, until the footman disappeared, when suddenly she threw a suspicious look towards the door, pulled a note from her bosom, told me to burn it when read, and vanished before I could ask a question.

There was no address upon the billet—but the first glance told me that it was from my old friend Phœbe. It contained a brief but urgent request to meet her in half an hour at a coppice she described; and she entreated me to be careful that I was not observed and followed.

I was exceedingly surprised; and before I committed the billet to the flames, as Susan had directed me, I perused it again. I had been apprised that Phœbe was no longer an inmate of the mansion, having entered into the holy estate of matrimony, and become, for the second time, and under very favourable auspices, landlady of the Cross Keys. Nothing, therefore, but some important communication could require an evening meeting; and, punctual to the invitation, I watched the half hour elapse, left the house unnoticed, and with due caution approached the underwood, whither I had been desired to proceed.

The night was dark; there was no moon, and the few stars which twinkled in the murky sky yielded but a feeble light. I had no difficulty, however, in finding out the place, as the clump lay close to the grand avenue, over which I had

driven in the morning. I stopped: a man issued from the coppice, and I challenged him. "It is the captain," he replied; and next moment my mother's confidant was standing beside me.

She seemed overjoyed at my return.

"So, Madam Phœbe, you have deserted your old admirer Denis O'Brien again? I thought I was to be honoured with a *tête-à-tête;* but I perceive it will be a trio."

"And do you suppose that a prudent woman like me would venture here without my husband? Lord! I should have died upon the spot with terror, in the firm belief that it was the poor colonel, and not his son, that stood before me."

"Am I then so like my father, Phœbe?"

"Wonderfully, in voice and figure. But did I not say truly, when I told you that ere long you would be here a visitor?"

"Ay, Phœbe; but an uninvited one."

"Is that the case? Well—I hear that your reception was most kind."

"It was more so than I dared hope: but that pleasure has been alloyed, and I have been engaged in a detested office."

"I know it all: I only left Miss Emily just now. Indeed, your fate are singular. God grant they may be more fortunate than present appearances would indicate!—Edward, observe the avenue closely."

Her husband moved to a distance that prevented him from overhearing the conversation that ensued.

"Attend to me—there is no time for anything but action, and concealment on my part would now be mischievous. *Miss Clifden loves you.* Tell me, I adjure you, by the memory of your parents, what are your feelings towards her? Be sincere—and if you deceive me, may God pardon you, for I never can."

"Phœbe, if man ever loved truly I am he. You only flatter me. How do you know Miss Clifden's sentiments? and why suppose that she prefers me? *me*—comparatively a stranger. Has she told you so, Phœbe?"

"Told me! poor soul, she does not suspect it herself. But am I not a woman? And a dull one I should be, if the events of this evening did not betray the state of her affections. Say what is to be done. Are you prepared to brave the old man's anger? Will you give up certain wealth, to unite your fortunes to those of an unportioned orphan, and see an alien supplant you with your grandfather, and inherit his immense estates? All these consequences are inevitable if you mar the old man's plans,—if, in a word, you wed with Emily Clifden!"

"All this will I risk; and, if my inheritance was tenfold, I am ready to make the sacrifice without a murmur."

"This looks indeed like love! Alas! poor boy, the warm blood of your gallant father flows freely in your veins! But if things could be delayed, a short time might avert the threatened mischief. I have a secret for you—one on which every hope of ultimate success mainly depends. Hear me attentively."

At this moment our vidette fell back, and told us that a figure had more than once flitted across the avenue.

"We must part," said Phœbe; "a discovery now would ruin all. Come to the Cross Keys to-morrow. Beware of one; that person is Annette. Ha! I see the figure moving distinctly.—Farewell! Come, Edward."

Placing the coppice between them and the suspicious personage, Phœbe and her husband hurried towards the village, and I slowly retraced my steps to the house. While returning, I looked sharply round to discover the cause of our alarm. No person was visible, and I entered the mansion as silently and secretly as I left it.

I declined supper, retired to my room, and having directed the servant to call me at an early hour, sat down to ponder over the occurrences of the day. My musing was of brief duration: a light tap struck the door; a female entered; and in her I had no difficulty to recognise my quondam acquaintance Annette, against whom I had been so particularly cautioned.

Whether I examined my Brussels friend with suspicious eyes, I know not; but I fancied that there was in her looks and carriage a bold air of coquetry that I had not formerly observed. She came in ostensibly to renew the fire, and it was evident she was in no hurry to depart; but, guarded as I was, I feared nothing from her cunning, and felt, in military parlance, that she would be unable to *outflank* me. To prevent any suspicions on her part, I assumed a levity of conversation, which she freely encouraged; and a smart flirtation ensued.

During our *tête-à-tête*, she carelessly introduced Miss Clifden's indisposition, and addressed one or two questions to me so artfully, that I found no small difficulty in evading them. Whatever the object of her visit was, she left me without effecting it; and I thought her countenance betrayed evident disappointment.

I went immediately to bed; invoked blessings on my darling Emily; and in my dreams shot Sedley in a duel, and was married and disinherited a dozen times before morning dawned.

I was not the first person in the breakfast-room; Emily was waiting for me. There was a languor in her look that indicated mental inquietude. Yet, were it possible, sorrow had rendered her more interesting: she seemed to me lovelier than ever? and, had I dared, I would have knelt and worshipped at the shrine of beauty. She was paler than usual; but the blush that dyed her cheeks—the pleasure that sparkled in her eyes, when I offered my morning compliments, persuaded me that Phœbe was not deceived; and that my gentle cousin would not frown upon my suit.

"Have you seen the old gentleman to-day, Emily?"—"Oh yes; I paid him my customary visit. He said that I looked unhappy; and his tone and language were far kinder than I expected."

"We were interrupted, Emily, before you replied to my inquiries regarding Sedley."—"Yes; I remember partly what you asked me, just as my guardian joined us."

"Well, servants have sharp ears, my sweet cousin, and we will reserve your reply until we are *tête-à-tête*. Will you walk with me after I have seen my grandfather? I have an evening interview to speak of——"

"Which I am very curious to hear. I hope you slept soundly last night?"—"No, Emily. Yesterday's events were too important; and my rest was broken and unrefreshing."

A summons from the invalid called me away:

and, promising to return shortly to the drawing-room, I was conducted to the old man's chamber.

He appeared feebler and more broken; and when he presented his hand, I felt it tremble in mine.

"Are you unwell this morning, sir?"—"I am nervous," he replied faintly, "and passed an indifferent night. How sped your evening interview? did Emily listen patiently to your arguments?"

"She was too much agitated to leave her room last night; and, this morning, the servants were too often in the parlour to allow me to resume the conversation."

He nodded, "I feel myself growing feebler daily; and it was fortunate that you returned so opportunely. I told you that my final arrangements were made, and all is ready for completing them. All, did I say? Oh no: one thing is in the way—a woman's caprice. Matters must be ended; and, if I am spared, I shall proceed to London by easy stages. You shall go on before. These deeds,"—and he pointed to several large-sized papers lying on the table beside him,—"these must be settled by counsel and engrossed. You shall take them to town, with letters to my solicitors containing the necessary instructions. Try your influence again with Emily; and, if it be possible, to bring her to a sense of her duty and her interest. My hour approaches fast; and opposition to my will would disquiet my last days, and leave her an unprotected orphan and slenderly provided for."

A carriage passed the window. "It is the doctor," said the invalid. "Go, John: we shall meet at dinner, if my strength admits it. Reason with Emily; and be ready to leave for London by the early coach to-morrow."

I found my situation a ticklish one enough. I had no choice left: either I must sacrifice my love for my charming cousin, or play the old man false. If I deceived him, and my disobedience was discovered, he would expunge me from his will, and alienate my maternal inheritance to a stranger, to whom my hatred and aversion were hourly becoming deeper.

It is strange what trifling circumstances occasionally decide a man in the most momentous action of his life! While I was musing on the perils that environed me, music was heard from the drawing-room. The gallery-door was open; I advanced, listened, and recognized the symphony of a song I had sent Emily from Paris with some foreign operas. I paused in breathless delight, while the sweet voice of the beautiful musician sang:

THE OUTLAW'S SERENADE.

I.

"The moon looks pale, for morn is nigh;
No lights are glancing from the tower;
Soft breezes through the myrtles sigh,
And wanton round thy birchen bower.
My courser stamps beneath yon tree;
The abbess dreams—the warder's sleeping;
Wake, Inez, wake! for moments flee;—
Is this a time, sweet maid, for weeping?

II.

"Oh! haste, and leave yon dreary hall,
For tangled glades and heathy mountains;
And when the evening dew-drops fall,
We'll rest by rills and murmuring fountains;
Where, for the pealing organ's swell,
At night, thou'lt hear the sentry's warning,—
Thy couch, the wild flowers from the dell—
Thy matin chime, the lark at morning.

III.

"Inez! no castle calls me lord,
No vassal serfs around me rally,—
My only wealth, my father's sword—
My only home, a highland valley.
Then come, and wildly live with me;
Haste, love! the tell-tale dawn is peeping;
Come to a breast that throbs for thee;—
Is this a time, sweet maid, for weeping?"

I found her ready for our walk. She took my arm, and we strolled for some time through the park, until we reached a thick and lofty hedge that enclosed a parterre from the open grounds. Emily unlocked the wicket, and introduced me to an ornamental flower-garden, which, as she informed me, was confided entirely to her care. It was prettily laid out, and kept with great neatness; and when my fair guide had pointed out her favourite plants, we sat down upon a rustic bench.

"Well, Emily, will you here, among your own myrtles, answer me the question I asked of you yesterday?"—"Repeat it." And she became pale as death.

"I will, Emily, at the request of another. Mr. Harrison this morning again pressed me to advocate his wishes, and——"

"Receive a refusal as decided as that I gave him yesterday."

"Do you then reject Mr. Sedley's suit? Will nothing change you, Emily?"—"Nothing!" she replied solemnly. "Weak as I am, and ill-prepared to wrestle with a world of which I know nothing, fears or hopes shall never shake my resolution: it is fixed—final—immovable!"

"Emily, let me plead for——"

"Blake! Blake! would you urge me to such falsehood as——"

"Not I, by Heaven! it was for another."

"*Another!*"—a burning blush suffused her pallid features—"*another!* There is none in the world beside that stern old man who cares for me."

"There is, Emily; one who loves you so devotedly, that he would resign wealth and ambition for you."

My arm supported her, or she would have fallen. I clasped her to my heart, and whispered, "Emily,—adored one!—I am that man!"

There are times when silence speaks the language of the heart more eloquently than words. She rested on my bosom—my lips were pressed to hers—my arm encircled her—"Wilt thou be mine, Emily?"

She raised her eyes, hid her blushing face, and murmured, "For ever!"

A minute passed: I gazed in mute rapture upon my young bride. She was mine—mine only. What was the world, its wealth, its bustle, its inquietude, to us? The warnings of him who ruled our fortunes were forgotten; and though ruin impended, it rendered the first avowal of mutual love more exquisite. It was the moment of transporting bliss, that man knows but once,—when woman owns a mutual passion. Suddenly, a rustling among the evergreens dispelled this trance of happiness. I looked hastily round,

and Annette was standing within three paces of the bench we rested on.

Never was "love's young dream" more rudely broken.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed the accursed *soubrette*, "I fear I have intruded on you unintentionally," And, with a look of pregnant meaning, she hurried away.

Here was a blessed blow-up—a regular discovery—and all occasioned by my forgetting to secure the wicket. I execrated my ill-luck, cursed my carelessness, and registered a vow in heaven, that if during the course of my natural life I made love again in a garden, I would turn the key in the door, before I pressed a hand, or "sighed a sigh."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MY RIVAL.—LOVERS' VOWS.

"There's a precious rogue for you?"
School for Scandal.

"You that are old consider not the capacities of us that are young."
Henry IV. Part II.

NEVER were lovers more desperately alarmed at the unexpected appearance of a lady's maid than poor Emily and myself. What were we to do? Should we risk all, and throw ourselves upon the old man's mercy,—own our transgressions, and prepare to bundle off in double-quick, with an assurance from him that, like Sir Anthony Absolute, he would "lodge five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and leave us to live upon the interest?"

A little consideration, however, told us, that to acknowledge my barefaced disobedience, and the total failure of his own favourite project, was too desperate a step to hazard with a determined personage like Mr. Harrison. We must, therefore, endeavour to conceal our engagement. But would Annette become a consenting party to this? We must win her over, if possible. Flattery might do much,—bribery more; and I would make the attempt and try both. If I failed, why then we must brazen the thing out. What could she disclose? Nothing—but that I had kissed my cousin. Well, it was, after all, a harmless indication of natural affection; and surely an innocent civility to one's relative was not only pardonable, but proper.

In this emergency, I recollected my appointment with Phœbe, and set out for the Cross Keys, to apprise her of our misfortune, and obtain counsel and assistance. She was expecting me. We retired to a private room, and the barmaid was desired to refuse admission to all intruders.

It would be impossible to describe poor Phœbe's horror when I acquainted her with the discovery, and she found we were at the mercy of Annette. "Good Heaven!" she exclaimed, "how distressing! The person upon earth whom you have most cause to apprehend danger from, possesses a secret on which your fortunes hang!"

"Well, Phœbe, it is idle to complain, I know the worst; and, like my father, will dare all, and——"

"Wreck the happiness of a being whose love for you will ruin her. No, no; matters are bad enough, but not altogether so desperate. Had you caution, management, artifice—call it what you please,—we might have hopes; but you are not the man to act with temper and coolly unmask a villain."

"You are mysterious. Dear Phœbe, I am not so rash as you imagine. Imprudent I admit myself to be: or I should never have been civil to my cousin in the garden, without first bolting the door."

"Confound your *badinage!* Will nothing make you serious? Ay, like the colonel in everything! Here, in this very room he kissed me, and forgot to close the curtains."

It often happens that in perplexing situations, and when persons are in no way predisposed for jocularity, something too ridiculous to resist will occur. This, Phœbe and I experienced; and, notwithstanding the untoward accident of the morning, we laughed heartily at the hereditary indiscretion of the Blakes.

"Now, do be grave, and listen to me," said my fair counsellor. "What I hinted at last night, I must fully explain, and leave you then to act upon my information.

"Before there was the least suspicion that Miss Clifden was designed for Sedley, or that his suit would meet the sanction of her guardian, I had reason to know that he looked forward to a union with the heiress of Stainsbury, as she was then supposed to be. Trifles, in themselves, of no importance, will frequently betray the best planned contrivances; and from close observation I discovered the object to which Sedley's ambition was directed.

"My suspicions were confirmed by his ill-concealed mortification, when, on the return of the family from the Continent, he learned by what singular occurrences you had been introduced to Mr. Harrison and his ward. A letter that Annette dropped, although it bore no signature, showed that a communication between her and Sedley existed; and the allusions to the old gentleman, Emily, and yourself, were not to be mistaken. Accident has latterly betrayed more. A person, calling himself Annette's brother, has met her frequently in this very room; and, from part of their conversation, which was overheard, I am persuaded that she is an unprincipled wretch in Sedley's pay, and placed here through his means to acquaint him with what occurs, and serve his purposes. But farther; through his own agents I have discovered that the affianced husband of Miss Clifden is profligate in his habits, a low debauchee, a ruined gambler. This is all concealed from Mr. Harrison. Sedley is a specious hypocrite; adopts a steadiness of manner when he visits the old man that would lull suspicion to rest, and passes with him as an exception to what youth are generally. That I have formed no erroneous estimate of his true character, one circumstance will convince you. At Mr. Harrison's table his temperance is remarkable; he declines wine and professes to be a water-drinker: while here, he indulges with Annette's brother so freely, that on more than one occasion I have seen them positively intoxicated. For my own reasons, I have encouraged them to frequent this house: and of me or my designs they harbour no suspicion. Here they are off their guard, and, for the interests of yourself and Miss Emily, I tolerate scoundrels that otherwise my house should never shelter.

"I know Sedley to be a villain,—but who can undeceive Mr. Harrison? Mine, after all, are but suspicions. I have no positive evidence of his profligacy to bring forward; yet, with management and caution, I am persuaded sufficient proofs could be obtained. No one can do this but you. You have facilities that may render the attempt successful. Your person is unknown to your rival; and I can give you his address in town—that is, his private one, for ostensibly he inhabits chambers in the Temple. Go directly to London; be active and secret, and you will find out enough to enable you to expose your rival's villany, disabuse your grandfather, and save Miss Clifden and yourself. And now, Heaven direct you!".

She gave me the addresses of Sedley and Williams—as the pretended brother of Annette designated himself; arranged a private channel of communication between Emily and me; and bade me an affectionate farewell.

It happened strangely enough, that the first person I met after leaving the Cross Keys was Annette. She was but a few yards before me; and I observed her, as she passed the post-office, stop for a moment, and drop a letter into the receiver. Doubtless it was a despatch to Sedley, with the full particulars of my detection in the garden. I overtook her before she entered the park-gates; but, from my interview with Phœbe, I had already determined to leave matters as they were, and make no effort to bribe the *soubrette* to secrecy. The experiment would be hazardous: she would betray me to my rival; and, desperately circumstanced as I was, nothing but a bold front would do, and the more indifference I showed the better.

"Annette," I said, "have you received your love-letters?"—"Oh no, captain; I was only sending a dutiful despatch to my mother. You are going, I suppose, to overlook Miss Emily's flower-garden, and practise 'love among the roses'?"

"I am no florist, Annette."—"Are you not? Then how unlucy that I should intercept Miss Clifden's lecture on carnations! I am very discreet, captain—how does your flirtation proceed?"

"You are at fault, Annette. I made my cousin my *confidante*, and was describing one of my *affaires de cœur* in Paris."

"Bless me! how innocent and interesting the detail must have been! You are for town to-morrow, I understand from James. When may we expect the honour of another visit? Once, I might have ascertained the movements of her gallant kinsman from Miss Clifden; but I am out of favour now. Adieu, captain! I shall expect new ribands at your wedding."

She turned towards the private entrance of the mansion, and I to seek my mistress in the drawing-room.

I found, however, that the old gentleman had inquired for me, and was shortly after summoned to his presence.

"Have you progressed better with my ward to-day?"

I shook my head.

"Then must I submit to her caprices. Sedley loses a wife, and wins a fortune that she should have shared with him. Well, the fault is not mine; the act is her own. Are you ready to set out for London in the morning?"—"I am, sir."

"Take these packets; deliver them as directed; and I will apprise you by letter on what day you may expect me. Do you want money?"—"No, sir; your allowance is still at the banker's."

"All the better," said the old man. "I asked the question, for I am ignorant of your habits: you may be parsimonious or profuse, dissipated or prudent;—your faults and virtues are equally unknown. I would speak to you: listen to me. To a certain extent I can make due allowances for youthful indiscretion;—beyond it, I have no pardon. You have been brought up in sorry schools. In infancy, your uncle's example, the barbarism of your country—where bravery is recklessness of life, and honour the homicide of an acquaintance,—all this is sufficient to demoralise you. Be patient, John; my homily is nearly ended. There are three things I cannot forgive,—I'll call them by their fashionable names,—gallantry, duelling, and play. Remember this; and, as I would think well of you, avoid them. If you become a seducer, a murderer, or a gambler, before you should heir one sixpence from me, I would endow an hospital,—ay, or adopt a gipsy. Farewell! I feel premonitory symptoms of approaching gout. You must dine with that disobedient girl; and I'll go to bed."

He pressed my hand, and soon after was assisted by his servant to his chamber.

Should I dwell upon the evening that Emily passed with me? Oh no! Hours flew, and midnight came unheeded. The denunciations of age, the arts of an unprincipled rival, a treacherous domestic, a recent discovery—all fearful in themselves—were disregarded or forgotten. I hung over the "sweet enthusiast" when she played, listened to her melody, repeated promises of unalterable love, and heard from her own dear lips assurances of reciprocated attachment. What were earthly considerations to us? We created a world for ourselves, threw sublunary matters to the winds, and, in the "madness of the moment," the delirium of my love, I would have persuaded Emily to leave her home and fly with me that night to Gretna.

But, with more prudence than I possessed, she pointed out the indiscretion of the step, and showed me the danger of such rashness. My gentle counsellor's argument was irresistible, and I submitted to expediency. Our motives, no doubt, were different: love for the old man was hers; mine, I lament to say, one more worldly and sordid. We did not part till the clock struck two; and when we did, in the presence of Susan, we called on Heaven to attest our vows, and plighted our faith for ever.

When I left Emily I stole quietly upstairs, lest the old man should hear me a-foot at this late hour. My bedroom was at the end of a corridor, and no one slept in that part of the mansion but myself. I found the door ajar, and perceived within "a light and a woman." It was Annette, coolly examining the contents of my *portefeuille*, which, with my customary imprudence, I had left unlocked. She started when she saw me, grew red and pale by turns, and looked amazingly guilty.

"You are up late, Annette."—"And so are others, gallant captain," she replied as her natural assurance returned.

"I really forgot the hour, until my cousin reminded me of it," I answered carelessly.—"And yet, if I recollect aright, there is a time-piece on the mantel——"

"Very possible, Annette."

"Well, captain, how speeds your suit? Is all settled but the ceremony?"—"Phoo! nonsense! Women dream of nothing but love-making. Cannot I consult my fair relative on certain grave matters of my own, but you must fancy that we are sentimentalising?"

"Will you make me your *confidante?* Phœbe could not serve you half so much or keep your secrets better."—"Phœbe! she has no secrets of mine."

"Indeed, sir!" and Annette looked archly at me: "then, faith, her husband had better look sharp, and interdict evening interviews in clumps and thickets."

"How you do rattle! But were you found here, and at this hour, what would the world say?"—"Nothing," replied the *soubrette*, "but that the maid, as in duty bound, imitated the prudent example of her mistress."

It was evident from her manner that she would have encouraged a little flirtation, had I been "i' the vein;" but I was so thoroughly apprised of her duplicity, that I could scarcely conceal my dislike. Annette was not without attractions,—I was cold to her charms; my indifference piqued her deeply, and she left me—an offended waiting-woman and a deadlier enemy than ever.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

THE STAGE COACH—THE CYNIC AND THE ROUÉ.

"In Ephesus I am about two hours old;
As strange unto your town as to your talk."
Comedy of Errors.

MORNING had not dawned, when the carriage came to the door to convey me to a neighbouring village, where I should meet the stage-coach. Having already secured a seat, I transferred my person and effects into "the leathern conveniency," and found therein two passengers, a lady and her protector. The sickly lamp-light prevented me seeing anything but the persons of my companions; and as they were sleepy, and I occupied with my own thoughts, none of us evinced a wish to be communicative, and we rolled over the first three stages as silently as if we had been denizens of La Trappe.

We stopped at the fourth inn, and the waiter intimated that "here we breakfasted." This announcement appeared to rouse the energies of all: the gentleman disencumbered himself of cloak and night-cap—handed his companion to the parlour—I followed, and found the travellers unmuffled, and ready for their morning repast.

I was struck at first sight with the lady's appearance: though past the middle age, she was remarkably attractive, and in youth had no doubt been beautiful. She was tall, graceful, *distinguée*, and her manners bore the stamp of fashion. Although in her air there was the decided coquetry of a Frenchwoman, it was mingled with a shade of melancholy that created for the fair stranger an additional interest. She hastily examined me from head to foot: and I was vain enough to think that my outward man found favour in her sight.

Her protector looked like a foreign *militaire*. He too was handsome, and appeared about the same age as his companion: yet, with a pleasing exterior, there was something coarse and repulsive in his manners; and the expression of his countenance was decidedly bad. I remarked that he never looked one in the face; and, from the first moment of our acquaintance, I rather felt an inclination to dislike him. From his dark moustache and soldierly carriage, I was persuaded that he was a brother of the sword: indeed, had I doubted his profession, the lady would have removed uncertainty on that score by asking "the colonel" for her reticule.

The fair traveller entered freely into conversation, and before breakfast ended we were on excellent terms. I learned from her, that she was returning to her native country from the Continent, where she had made a long sojourn. She had moved, no doubt, in excellent society, to judge from the elegance of her manners, as well as the known fashion of those whom she spoke of as being her intimate friends. I thought she sometimes looked at me with a peculiar expression; and when she removed her eyes I heard her sigh heavily. Did not the image of my absent love engross me wholly, the interest I had created in the strange beauty would have been flattering, and ascribed by vanity to a different cause from that which probably occasioned it.

It was twilight when we stopped in Piccadilly; and here we separated,—they for a family hotel in Leicester-square, and I for my former quarters in Berners Street. While the colonel's luggage was being exchanged into a hackney-coach, he personally inspected its removal, and the lady and I of course were left together. Observing that her husband was occupied, in a low and hurried tone she asked me for my card. What could she want with my address? How could I tell? I gave it,—shook hands with her,—bade the colonel "Good-bye,"—hoped that we should meet again,—and we started for our respective abodes.

Had my heart been disengaged, I might have plumed myself on the conquest I had achieved. Undoubtedly, my coach companion was a woman of uncommon personal attractions: her regard for me was flattering—my success certain;—for Cæsar-like, I had conquered at first sight. Yet it was a curious circumstance that I did not know the name of my Dulcinea: they were travelling in strict incognito, and the colonel had sunk his title "for the nonce;" for his baggage was ticketed with the unpresuming name of

"Johnson," preceded by a simple "Mr." Well, no doubt time would discover who my inamorata was; and in that hope I sat down to dinner with a traveller's appetite.

As I sipped my wine, I know not why it was, but recollections of my quondam friend Edwards, of "the Rainbow," haunted my memory; and at times doubts of the respectability of Colonel Johnson and his companion arose. But the appearance of both, and more particularly the lady, removed these apprehensions; and although it was unusual for persons of superior fashion to travel in a public carriage, and unattended by a servant of either sex, still there might be reasons with which I was unacquainted, sufficient to extenuate the crime of wayfaring in a stage-coach. From these speculations I turned to considerations of greater moment—namely, how I was to proceed in obtaining the information of Sedley's character and circumstances which it was so necessary should be procured.

Never did man need counsel more. I was a stranger,—knew nobody in town who could assist me; and so ignorant of the localities of London, that had I to call in the next street, I should have required a guide to direct me to it. Indeed, the whole business appeared so difficult, that I half determined to abandon it as hopeless—denounce Sedley to my grandfather, and tell him what I had learned from Phœbe of his profligacy. What then?—would he condemn his ward unheard, and, on bare assertions of his unworthiness, discard his old friend's son? No; the attempt would fail, and a crisis be precipitated that might ruin Emily and me. Unable to decide on any course of conduct that promised reasonable chances of success, I had no alternative but to trust all to fortune.

I remembered that the packet I had been entrusted with required an immediate delivery, called a coach and set off to Lincoln's-inn-Fields, where the old man's solicitor resided.

Although the evening was far advanced, I found Mr. Stanley at home, and busy in his private office. I was immediately admitted, and graciously received. Opening the packet, he glanced hastily over the instructions it contained, and told me that next morning Mr. Harrison's wishes should be attended to. After some general conversation, and very minute inquiries touching the old gentleman's health, he asked me how long I had been in town. I told him.

"God bless me!" he exclaimed; "your arrival at Long's on Wednesday, was mentioned in the morning papers."—"Indeed! that is remarkable: they have anticipated my visit by two days."

"Mr. Sedley showed it to me in *The Morning Post*," said the solicitor.—"The statement is nevertheless in every way a false one. My hotel is in 'Berners,' and not 'Bond' Street."

The conversation dropped. Mr. Stanley took my address; I bade him good night, and we parted.

I strolled leisurely westward, and reached Covent Garden as the clock was striking ten. To fill up a heavy hour, I turned into one of the numerous taverns which surround the market, and ensconced myself in a corner box, from whence, unseen myself, I could observe the several parties that occupied the tables of the coffee-room.

At the nearest two persons were seated; and to judge from the earnest manner of him who was placed opposite me, their conversation was interesting.

The speaker was a remarkable man; tall, slight, gentlemanly, and well-looking. Though young, his hair was grizzled, and the cast of his countenance dejected and care-worn. His dress was indifferent; and though each garment was fashionably cut, the whole was of showy and ill-assorted colours. A morning frock was united to full-dress trousers—woollen mits assorted badly with a velvet waistcoat—while his spotted neck-cloth was at total variance with the light shoes he wore, and which bore evident marks of having recently traversed dirty streets—a duty for which they never had been designed. In short, the whole appearance of the stranger was "shabby genteel," and I wrote him down at once a "ruined gentleman."

I watched him attentively. His story was no doubt an affecting one, for at times his manner was vehement and impassioned, and more than once I saw a tear glisten on his cheek. Presently he rose, took his hat, and I observed that his friend presented him with a bank-note, which after some slight scruples he pocketed, and then withdrew.

His companion did not remain long after; he rang the bell, called a waiter, and discharged the bill. I was rather curious to see the face of one whose liberality I had just witnessed. He stopped to look at the clock; and when he turned round for a moment, I recognized in the humane stranger, my Mentor of the militia—the cynic Aylmer! He had quitted the coffee-room, but I overtook him at the door.

"Pardon me, sir; I believe I speak to Captain Aylmer?"—"*Mister*, if you please," said my quondam counsellor: "my military career is ended;—captains have overstocked the market—the name now-a-days does not even answer for travelling,—the title is a drug—and were there honour in it, I am too old to be ambitious."

The dry and caustic manner of my ancient counsellor was marked more strongly, even than when he aided in my deliverance from matrimony at country-quarters. He continued.

"May I inquire who it is addresses me? as I neither recollect your figure or voice."

"This is very possible. But admitting that I might not be fortunate enough to claim a personal acquaintance, would not the introduction of an old and valued friend be a sufficient apology for intruding on you?"—"Humph!" said the cynic. "Friends, sir, are so few with me, that I feel some anxiety to know who this valued gentleman may be."

"Captain O'Moore, probably, will be acknowledged by that title," I returned.—"Philip O'Moore is dead," Aylmer answered coldly; "'*Nil de mortuis*,'—you know the adage, and the less said of him the better."

"Ah! I did not hear of your poor friend's death," said I. "Would Captain Daly's recommendation be more efficient?"—"Sir," said the cynic gruffly, "if your passports are similar, allow me to bid you a good evening."

"Bless me!" I exclaimed, "how soon 'auld lang syne' is forgotten! Well, friendship fails, it seems;—a softer tie—a lovelier name, may serve the purpose. Would Miss Lucinda. that

'best of daughters,' do?"—"Now," cried the cynic, with unfeigned astonishment, "who the devil are you?"

"Am I too forgotten?—*me*, your quondam disciple, who, but for your evil counsel, might have been 'Benedict the married man,' and the happy father of a young and interesting progeny?"

Aylmer stopped before a lighted window, and examined my features with attention.

"By heaven! it is himself," he exclaimed. "Boy—but *boy* I must term you longer, for yours are the deeds of manhood;—I have met you when I wished it——"

"And I required it most."—"Humph!" said the cynic, suspiciously."

"Yes; I never needed a friend's assistance more."—"Pecuniary, I presume," said Aylmer, "if one may judge from your exploits on Moulsey Hurst, and your success in Jermyn-street. You promised to profit by my parting advice; and how have you redeemed that pledge?—by consorting with vagabonds to patronize a bruising-match, where you were sold: and winning money in a hell by risking ruin, to lavish it upon the most worthless Jezebel that ever destroyed a dupe!"

I stared: here was a voluminous accusation—numerous in its counts as an indictment for high treason.

"What does the man mean?" I exclaimed. "Are you drunk or crazy, Aylmer?"—"Neither," said the cynic: "the madness, I suspect, lies with you. But how can you want money at this moment? I know you were cleaned out upon the Heath, as the ruffians call it; but you won seven hundred this morning, and surely Pauline has not sacked it all?"

"Seven hundred devils!"—"Ay, seven hundred pounds at billiards," replied the cynic.

"Then the table was in a stage-coach."—"The table was in Bury-street. Did you not pass the morning in Goldley's private rooms?"

"No; for I was rumbling in the Manchester Rocket from cockcrow till dinner-hour."—"This is astonishing," said Aylmer. "One question more,—when did you last drive Pauline Le Grande to Richmond in your phaeton?"

"I never had a phaeton in my life; and you may as well ask me when I drove out your grandmother."—"Well, one of us must be mad," he returned. "Here, step into this place, till we decide which be the proper candidate for St. Luke's."

It was a French restaurateur's in Leicester-square: we seated ourselves at a remote table, ordered supper, and over a bottle of wine resumed the conversation.

"And have you not been rioting in and about the metropolis part of last winter, and latterly for a month?"—"I have not been in England quite a week; and of that time, not twenty hours in London," I replied.

"Then," said the cynic, "you should take an action against every newspaper within the bills of mortality. Why, man, you'll live in history: your movements have been regularly chronicled, and your figure lithographed in half the print-shops about town. *The Post* provided you with a mistress; *The Herald* delivered you a message from her keeper, Sir Henry Harewood; *The Courier* bound you over to keep the peace; *Life in London* had you fox-hunting in Northamptonshire; while, in *The Essex Mercury* you have miraculously escaped death from the bursting of a gun. Pray, may I ask, are you Jack Blake, *olim* of the —— militia?"

"Assuredly I am Jack Blake, and formerly an unworthy ensign in that distinguished corps."

"And," said the cynic, "do you not box—drive—carry off *figurantes*?"—"No, no, no: to all and every of these charges I plead 'Not guilty.'"

"And will you deny that you have been blown up and bound over? Do you not ride,—play——"

"Nothing but piquet," I replied.

"And never, I hope, by moonlight." And Aylmer and I laughed heartily at old recollections.

"Well, Master Jack Blake, you are to me a perfect puzzle. All that I have told you of your being *éclated* in the newspapers is true."—"I believe it, Aylmer. Part of it I read myself at Stainsbury."

"But," resumed the cynic, "what most confounds me is, that this very evening I had full particulars of the billiard-playing I accused you with, from one of the party who was actually present at the match. Did you observe the person that parted with me at the tavern in Covent Garden?"—"Yes, I particularly noticed him."

"Well, I must tell you who that person is," said Aylmer.

"I should take him to be a reduced gentleman."—"And that he is," said the cynic, "in everything,—looks, character, and fortune. When I was in the Blues, that unhappy man joined the —— Hussars at Brighton. He was the second son of Sir John Evelyn, one of the oldest baronets in Great Britain, and just come into possession of twenty-five thousand pounds, bequeathed him by a distant relation. Briefly and brilliantly as my ruin was completed, his career was by far a shorter one. In two years he had dissipated his fortune,—lost his commission,—been disinherited by his father,—and married a woman he kept, and old enough to have been his mother. In short, he was an outcast and a blackleg,—disclaimed by his acquaintance, and abandoned by his family. When his last guinea was gone, the wretch his wife, whose beauty was still remarkable, left him in a prison to share the fortunes of a German swindler. Those who had lived upon him for months 'cut him dead,' and one for whom he—

> 'Kept his credit with his purse.
> Supported his estate, and paid his men their wages,'

refused his humble application for a pound. Every door was closed against the wretched prodigal—every face averted—and to save himself from starvation, he has become the *attaché* of a low hell—a decoy to lure unsuspecting idiots to destruction. That it is a sorry calling, his haggard looks and shabby dress evinces; and he, poor wretch! who once drove with four bays of matchless beauty a *prima donna* in Hyde Park, is roaming through the streets in worn-out dancing-shoes, uncertain where to get a supper, and ignorant of the hole in which he shall find a shelter for the night.

"In better times I knew him: he heard that I

had recovered my estate,—for, Jack, I have at last buried 'little Isaac,'—and made me out; and as he could not venture abroad safely by day, he made an appointment to meet at the coffee-room where you witnessed the close of our interview. It was from Evelyn that I heard of your billiard-match; and also that you were marked by a systematic gang of swindlers for sure and speedy ruin. Is it not strange that this man could be mistaken?"

"In faith, it is, friend Aylmer; and, 'pon my soul! I begin to entertain serious doubts of my own identity. But hear me now, for I have much to tell;—listen, and then advise me."

Accordingly I briefly narrated such passages of my life as it was necessary for him to know, and gave a full detail of the dangerous position in which I found myself placed at present.

"This is indeed a strange tale of yours," said the cynic, when I ended; "and how we should act requires deep consideration. It is late, and time to separate. Come to breakfast at nine o'clock, and we will then decide on what measures it will be most prudent to adopt."

He gave me his address, and I set him down at private lodgings in a narrow street off the Strand, and then drove home, and safely deposited my person in "mine own inn."

CHAPTER II.

NOTORIETY.—MY COUSIN JACK.

"The newspapers! Sir, they are the most villanous—licentious—abominable—infernal. Not that I ever read them;—no; I make it a rule never to look into a newspaper."

The Critic.

"Her form had all the softness of her sex,
Her features all the sweetness of the devil."

Don Juan.

I FELT more pleasure than I can describe at my opportune meeting with my old friend Aylmer. He came to my assistance at the crisis of my fate; and, like the good genius of my fortunes, stepped in to save me. None could advise me better;—alive to the villanies of the world, he had not passed through the rough ordeal of adversity without laying its wisdom to his heart. My courage rose,—the blood of the Blakes warmed in my veins—and, with Aylmer to aid, I felt persuaded I should come off conqueror, and win the woman that I loved, without losing "a fair inheritance." I went to sleep comparatively happy, and in my dreams knelt with Emily to Mr. Harrison, who joined our hands and gave us his benediction.

I was still thinking of my sweet cousin, when the waiter called me. I dressed, drove to Cravenstreet, and found Aylmer up and breakfast waiting.

He was perusing a newspaper when I entered; and, with a smile, handed me *The Morning Herald.*

"Here you go again, Jack! But for you and the frail countess, who has levanted with the younger brother of a broken-down baronet, the papers, like Shallow's estate, would be 'barren—barren.'"

I stared at him, and then read the following paragraph:—

"The match between Count Strogonoff, the celebrated billiard-player, and Captain Blake of sporting notoriety, came off yesterday at the patent table in Goldey's Rooms, in presence of a large and fashionable party. The play on both sides was beautiful, till fortune, for a long time doubtful, at last declared the gallant captain conqueror. Large sums on this occasion changed owners, as the count was freely backed at five to two. The winner, it is said, netted a 'cool thousand.' A new match is spoken of, as the count is not disposed to acknowledge his rival's superiority."

I laid down *The Heraid.*

"This is too bad, Aylmer."—"It is," said the cynic, "for here you are again;" and he handed me *The Post.*

"ON-DIT.—Le Grande has quarrelled with her Hibernian protector. We have heard the particulars; but, for obvious reasons, and at this stage of the affair, must decline giving them to the world. We shall not say who is in fault; but certainly, if Captain Blake visits the *vocalist* of Drury Lane at *three o'clock in the morning*, we do think conscientiously, that the fair *artiste* in Curzon-street has reason to be jealous."

"Who can this infernal captain be? What shall I do, Aylmer? If the fellow continues in town I must assassinate him, or he will be my ruin."

"Why, faith," said my comforter, "it is provoking. And now I see you by daylight, the caricatures in the print-shops are most ridiculously like you."

"Then Heaven help me!" I exclaimed. "Have you considered my case, and decided on the course I must pursue?"

"I have lost a night's rest by you," replied Aylmer: "will you be directed by me?"—"I will."

"You promise it!"—"I do: you shall guide me entirely."

"Then," said the cynic, "you must leave your hotel, and content yourself with quiet apartments here. You must be my nephew for a week; and instead of Blake, we'll call you occasionally Aylmer."

"Content! But wherefore is this incognito necessary?"—"Simply that you may, yourself unknown, find out your rival, and ascertain whether he is the *roué* and hypocrite that he is described to be. We must employ some agents,—one I have already selected,—and if Sedley plays, I'll know it before to-morrow night. The man to effect this is Evelyn: and we will meet him this evening. You shall be my nephew; and ere the week passes I'll make or mar your fortunes."

I dined with Aylmer at the London Coffee-house; and at nine o'clock we left Ludgate-hill for an obscure tavern near Smithfield, where the ruined gambler had appointed a meeting with the cynic. A walk of five minutes through filthy lanes brought us to the place; and beneath a gloomy archway we entered a stable-yard, and turned into "the tap" of the Black Lion. There Evelyn was waiting for us.

He looked at us suspiciously. The cynic named me as his nephew, and he then became unreserved and cheerful. Aylmer, with admirable tact, led him imperceptibly to the subject; and Evelyn volunteered to do what we were so anxious to effect.

"We want some brandy," said the wretched man; and the waiter promptly replenished the glasses. "What the deuce can you want with this Sedley? Does he hold any of your securities?"

"No matter: it is important that I should know everything about him. We are alone—you asked me for five pounds last night, and I gave it you."—"Well," said the *roué*, "you did."

"Would you earn fifty more?"

Evelyn's eyes glis ened.

"Ay, and a week will do it"—said Aylmer: "and, to prove my sincerity, here are ten pounds as a retainer."—"Agreed!" cricd Evelyn; "I am yours: say what am I to do? But for this supply, I should be supperless."

Aylmer shook his head.

"It is true, by Heaven! I went with your bank-note to the silver hell, and left it this morning without sufficient money to buy my breakfast. Chance gave me a dinner, otherwise I should have met you fasting."

I shuddered as I looked at him. The accursed love of play still fascinated the ruined wretch.

"Do we understand each other?" said the outcast.—"Perfectly," Aylmer replied. "Jack, leave us."—I obeyed, and strolled down the street while Evelyn received ample instructions.

We parted presently,—the gambler to his vocation, and the cynic and I to our lodgings in Craven-street.

It was but ten o'clock, and Aylmer had some appointment with a solicitor. I left him at the lawyer's house, hurried home, dressed, and, it being opera night, drove to the King's Theatre.

Is there a man who, at twenty-one, has seen that brilliant spectacle for the first time, that will ever forget the splendour of its effect? I never shall. I came in as the second act of "Semiramide" was ending; and, before the ballet commenced, had sufficient time to look around and admire in the boxes all that was beautiful and *distingué*.

It was a fashionable night. The house was full—the pit very crowded; but I crushed myself into a place, and found in my next neighbour a very communicative personage, who appeared to know everything and everybody. From his accurate knowledge of names and titles, and the frequent use he made of his tablets in taking notes, I concluded that he was reporting for a newspaper. To me, when he ascertained that I was a stranger to the town he was extremely polite; and his information and anecdotes were varied and interesting.

The curtain rose—the ballet commenced, and the music, scenery, and dancing were enchanting. The fairy splendour of the Eastern romance was realised in the beautiful spectacle. I gazed with delight on the business of the ballet: a grand procession, and a dance of sylphs, elicited in their turn the plaudits of the spectators. A pause, as if that of expectation, succeeded;—every eye was turned to the stage,—on came the expected one, and a more brilliant *artiste* never executed a *pas seul*.

"Who is that exquisite creature?" I inquired from my obliging neighbour.—"Oh, that is Pauline le Grande. Is not her dancing to-night superb?"

"And can that splendid woman be as worthless as she is described to be?" I asked him—"There cannot be a more depraved one in existence. Her profligacy and profusion are unbounded: she has ruined more young men than all the *intrigantes* on this establishment. Peers, baronets, bankers—all have had reason to curse her fascinations. She now calls a young Irishman her protector, whom she will first plunder, and then discard."

"And who may this unfortunate victim be?" I inquired.

"I wonder he is not here to-night;" and he looked round the house, and particularly directed his eyes to a lower side-box, where a showy and rather over-dressed gentlewoman of portly dimensions was sitting with a very pretty girl. "Those, sir, are the wife and daughter of an East Indian director; and report says, that Captain Blake is a professed admirer of the younger lady—before the ballet ends, it is more than probable he will call in there. The girl is an only daughter, and consequently an heiress; but the old indigo-planter will not countenance the addresses of the wildest Irishman upon town. The captain is said to be of ancient family and good estate; but, Lord, sir! as you and I know, Irish properties are mostly in the moon."

I was all anxiety to see this distinguished countryman of mine who had attained such fashionable celebrity. Who could he be! I ran over every Blake among the tribes; wild ones there were enough, but none that answered to the description given me of the protector of Pauline. The ballet was nearly over, and the bustle of departure commenced; still the East Indian's box was unvisited by any lady-killer like the redoubted captain. I was sadly disappointed. Down came the curtain, and the pit began to thin. My kind neighbour the reporter buttoned his coat, and prepared to move. He had already taken a step or two, when, suddenly stopping, he touched my arm—"Look, sir," he said, "that gentleman is Le Grande's protector."

I turned my eyes where he pointed to, and in the dashing personage who was assisting to shawl the ladies in the Director's box, I recognised the well-remembered features of my excellent namesake, "Jack the Devil."

I was perfectly confounded. What evil planet had driven him at this time to London? Bright as his career appeared to be at present, I knew that it must be brief in its duration, and miserable in its close. How did he finance? whence obtain supplies to defray the reckless expenditure of his extravagant mode of life? No funds came to him from Galway; for there, alas! all was litigation and distress. The gaming-table must afford him resources—then was he on the brink of ruin. Could he be saved? I had personal difficulties enough to annoy me; but still I must strive to preserve my kinsman from destruction.

I hastened to the piazza to meet him; but was just in time to see him hand a lady to her carriage,—step in himself,—turn into St. James's-square,—and whither then, Heaven alone could tell.

CHAPTER III.

NEW ACQUAINTANCES.—PAULINE LE GRANDE. —THE BARON HARTZMANN.

"*Joseph.* In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I ever heard.

Lady S. Poor Charles.

Joseph. Ay, poor Charles, indeed. Notwithstanding his extravagance, one cannot help pitying him. I wish it was in my power to be of any essential service to him."

School for Scandal.

WHEN I reached Craven-street, I found Aylmer waiting my arrival impatiently.

"What has detained you? I feared that you had lost your way,—forgotten the street,—eloped with a *danseuse*,—or taken another lesson in piquet, as there is tolerable moonlight."

"All these fears, Aylmer, were groundless. My absence was caused by graver considerations: I have met my other self, and seen the celebrated captain."—"Indeed! who is the delinquent?"

"My uncle's heir,—the head of all the Blakes, and, to use Falstaff's words, known as 'Jack with his familiars—John with his brothers and sisters, if he had any—and Jack the Devil by all Europe.'"

"Was not your own web a tangled one enough," said the cynic, "but this infernal kinsman with the ominous name must figure in to add to our embarrassments?"

"What can be done, Aylmer?"—"Nothing, but leave him to his fate: before a fortnight, he will be shot, married, or safe within the Bench."

"I cannot desert him; and come what may, I must at least make one effort to extricate him."—"Pshaw!" said Aylmer, "the attempt is idle. He will, no doubt, disgorge his winnings before the week ends; and then how is he to raise the wind? What power has he over the estates? Can he sell, mortgage, or do anything in that species of security that Israelites delight in,—

'[illegible] 'Double-damn'd post-obits?'"

"Power enough, I fear, to wreck his fortunes."

"Well, go to him in the morning—you will find him at Long's, or in Curzon-street. If he can leave town, get him off; for another week—nay, another hour may close his history, like that of the thousand-and-one fools who have preceded him in the road to ruin."

"He won't go, I fear."—"Send him from Paris a message from some injured brother,

'To say his sister's feelings are trepanned;'

and, as he is a true gentleman, he'll start by the Dover coach without stopping to ask particulars."

"And if he prove intractable?"—"Get him into an asylum: swear—and you can do it safely—that he is a lunatic; and, if this won't do, turn anabaptist yourself, and obtain another name.—To bed, Jack! I have been working for you all the evening;—had an hour's *tête-à-tête* with as great a scoundrel as ever issued a writ—a regular shark, an Old Bailey solicitor;—and to-morrow I have made an appointment with a Bow-street runner."

"Villanous company," I whispered.—"Ay; but, like other nuisances, society requires them.—'Good-bye.'" He took his candle, and I followed the example, and sought a sleepless pillow.

A grey, misty, unhealthy morning broke my uneasy slumbers. I rose, dressed, and descended to the drawing-room, where Aylmer had been for some time expecting me.

"You are a sluggard, Jack! For breakfast now, and then for business. I have been considering our delicate position, and I would propose a division of labour. I will undertake to manage your affairs, if you will only engage to regulate the movements of Jack the Devil."—"Agreed. I think that I can do anybody's business better than my own, and——"

"I'll bet an opera-ticket, notwithstanding, that I shall be called upon to redeem some 'false cast' within twenty hours."—"Done! I am more cautious than you will give me the credit for being."

"Then we do not meet till evening," said Aylmer. "I have not looked over the morning papers, and I am in ignorance whether you occupy a paragraph or two, as is 'your wont.' You are safe, I fancy, for this turn. Not a line—your name not even dragged into a dinner-party. Stop! egad, here you go! Why what a hopper you must be!"—"A hopper!"

"Yes;—sixty yards in fifty hops, and won by seventeen inches and a quarter. Lord! man, you are coining! A wager between you and Lord Lorimer, for one hundred, p. p. Why, El Dorado is nothing to Cockayne? Could you instruct a friend? But no—I am too stiff to hop."

I was desperately mortified. Again in print, and more ridiculous—I, a sober personage, hopping for hundreds!

"And now, Jack," said the cynic, gravely, "either you or the hopper must abdicate. The town is not large enough for both; and if you hope to succeed with your grandfather, and gain his ward, despatch your infernal friend forthwith to Paris, Rome, Kamschatka,—any place he will go to. If he remains here the game is gone, and you are but 'a lost priest.'"

He was right: Jack would ruin a regiment. We separated,—Aylmer on a secret mission connected with my affair, and I to unkennel the heir of Castle Blake—if that were possible.

At Long's he was not, nor had he been since he dressed for the opera on the preceding evening. I slipped the waiter a crown, and asked him where I should be most likely to find the gallant captain. He smiled and whispered that at No. —, Curzon-street, I should be certain to make him out.

Thither I drove—knocked—was let in, and demanded of a footman six feet high, with aiguillettes large and rich enough for a staff officer, whether Captain Blake was at home. He bowed, simpered, said that he would inquire, and asked me for a card. I told him I had forgotten my ticket-case, and he disappeared.

The house was small but very elegant; and as I waited in the hall for the domestic's return—who, from the unpresuming appearance of my equipage, was of course in no hurry back—I had time to contrast my last and present visits to my worthy kinsman. In Dublin I found him domesticated with a dressmaker; in London, the favourite of the first *figurante* of the day; and I fancied that but for the honour of the thing, Jack the Devil would have been just as safe with Miss Lightbody as with Mademoiselle Pauline le Grande.

At last, he with the aiguillettes reappeared, and signalled me to follow him. I ascended the stairs, entered the drawing-room, and, extended upon a sofa, and wrapped in his flowered silk dressing-gown, found my uncle's heir-apparent—the representative of all the Blakes.

One look satisfied him of my identity: he sprang like a racket-ball upon his feet, and wrung my hand with all the ardour of a brother. Questions and replies touching my unexpected appearance in the Modern Babylon were promptly interchanged, and we sat down together on the sofa.

"I am so overjoyed to see you here, John!"—"I wish, Jack, that I could with any sincerity return you the compliment," I replied coldly.

"Did you find me easily?" said my cousin, rather bothered at the dryness of my manner and address.—"There is no difficulty in doing that, Jack, provided a man can read, and has means to procure a newspaper. You are honourably mentioned of late."

"Come, come, John; are you turned saint? I have heard of your own scrapes before you left the militia."—"Yes; there is no doubt that I made myself more than once ridiculous. I called at your hotel, and find you don't sleep there. Pray is it customary in London for men to have sundry places of abode? But I want you particularly: come with me to my lodgings."

"Where are they?"—"In Craven-street."

"Craven-street!" ejaculated Jack the Devil, and I thought he would have fainted. "Lord! John, don't say that you *hang out* in such a den; that address upon your card would ruin you in the *beau monde* past redemption. You must establish yourself at Long's—the Blenheim—the Burlington—in fact, any civilized spot, and cut Craven-street directly."

"But I won't cut Craven-street, so come along."—"Zounds! man, I have not breakfasted yet."

"I'll wait for you—it's only the loss of half an hour: do ring the bell and order up the kettle. You can make tea, can't you? That accomplishment of course you learned in the Galway. How ultra-fashionable you have become!—two o'clock, and no breakfast."

"I was late up last night," said my kinsman. "I am waiting for a friend. I'll introduce you to a charming companion."

"Is he a Connaught man? Do I know him?"—"It is a lady," said Jack, in some confusion.

"Indeed! Miss Lightbody, I presume. She has come to London, then? Corset-making must be a thriving trade, if one may judge of her funds by the furniture of the room."

It was indeed a magnificent apartment: rare, and expensive articles of *virtù*, china of matchless beauty, and vases of exquisite workmanship, covered cabinets and tables of rich *marqueterie*. On the chimneypiece stood a bust of Pauline, executed in Italian marble; and suspended from the opposite wall hung a full-length painting in oil of the *danseuse*, in the character of Calypso—and certainly the goddess never had a lovelier representative. I looked at the splendour of the apartment with a sigh, when I remembered that many a ruined dupe had contributed to this costly display.—"Why, hang it! John, are you become a Goth—a Vandal? France has destroyed you. A corset-maker! Zounds! man, it's Le Grande; the most dashing *coryphée* in Christendom."

"I won't remain a moment! Are you so totally undone as to be acquainted with that harpy? Jack, Jack! what would Manus Blake feel, did he but know the certain ruin into which his only child was rushing!"

I rose, and took my hat; but my retreat was suddenly cut off, for the door opened and Pauline made her *entrée*.

She approached so gracefully, that for the life of me, I could not have bolted. I was presented by Jack, and received with smiles. Mechanically I laid my hat aside and resumed my place upon the sofa, and in five minutes ceased to wonder at my cousin's fascination; for, in sooth, Saint Senanus himself could have scarcely looked upon Le Grande with indifference.

Pauline was in the zenith of her beauty—her figure full, voluptuous, and finely moulded; her face rather expressive than regular, with eyes dark as midnight, and hair black and glossy as the raven's wing. But there was an air of classic elegance in the formation of the head, united to a neck of exquisite proportion, that made the *ensemble* irresistible. Every movement was perfection; and it was impossible to conceive that a creature so admirably formed, could be coarse in her habits, heartless, mercenary, and profligate.

She understood English perfectly: it was fortunate for Jack that in this she differed from the greater number of foreign *artistes*, for he spoke no language besides his native tongue. It seemed that I had been mentioned to Le Grande, for she claimed me as an acquaintance, and invited me to Curzon-street that evening, to meet her particular friends Baron Hartzmann and his lady. I hesitated, and was fabricating some probable excuse, when Jack addressed me in Irish.

"For once, John—do, like a decent fellow. If *you* asked me to go to Pandemonium, you know *I* would oblige you. Now do: say you will. Come, out with it—and then I'm your man till evening."

I believe that for the first time in her life, Pauline heard "the accents of the mountain tongue."

"Heavens! Blake, what barbarous sounds are these?"—"Irish, my love. Lord! if you but knew the language!"

She smiled—repeated the invitation,—I consented: Jack whispered to her for a moment apart; and we took our hats and bade Pauline good morning.

"Is my drag waiting?" inquired the friend of the *danseuse* from the gentleman with the aiguillettes.—"Yes, sir, some time, sir." He bowed us out, and we found at the door a well-appointed phaeton, with a pair of the best matched greys in London.

"Whose, Jack, is this? A good turn out, 'faith."—"Glad you like it," as he took the ribands: "it's mine."—"Yours?"

"Yes, mine. Where shall I drive you to?"—"The Bench."

"Have you any friend there?"—"No; but I shall have one in a day or two."

"Who?"—"Yourself, Jack. I want to secure you comfortable apartments: the place I hear is crowded."

"Nonsense, John! D—n it! you are turned

croaker," said my cousin. But I saw he coloured deeply at my observations.

"Jack, I am come to speak to you soberly, quietly, seriously. What are the means by which you are to support this ruinous expenditure? Your father a distressed gentleman, unable to leave his park, and prisoner in an enclosure of some five hundred acres. You are heir in expectancy to four thousand a-year; and you live already, if your income was an honest one, at half that sum. Jack, have you a hundred in your pocket, and would one thousand pay your debts!—and yet you are barely six months on town."

Jack winced. "D—n it, man! stop preaching. Where shall I take you to?"—"Any place you please. The Bench you will visit in good time, and therefore choose another drive. Drop me at the first coach-stand, for *I* have business to attend to, and *you* are *a man of ton*."

"Business," said Jack the Devil; "why what business can you have?"—"I'll tell you. I received in France a sum of money from a dying man, and I promised to execute a trust. That pledge is sacred; and before I attend to my own affairs, the orphan of that luckless soldier must be inquired after. I have told the occurrence to a friend, and he has directed me how to act. This will engage me for the morning,—but we'll dine together; and name your place and time."

"Bravo, John! agreed: but no chop-house,—no 'two-and-sixpenny concern,'—nothing in the 'cheap and nasty way.'"—"I name Long's; and do you order dinner."

"Well that's honest," said my cousin; "that smacks like good old times. Let us try this French fellow in the Haymarket: that's your man! Gives you a stylish blow-out,—good wines,—capital brandy,—charges high. He's dear, the devil—but he does the thing."

"Very well, Jack; at six we meet at Lauriston's. Here, this is Conduit-street; set me down; we're at a coach-stand."

Jack the Devil hesitated a little, found courage, and proceeded. "Zounds! John, you must get something private; this jarvey work won't do."

"I think I know where I shall get a carriage cheap?"—"Eh! where? Let me see it. Is it new—natty?"—"You know it;—quite the thing,—fit to sport a *figurante* in to Richmond."

"Have I seen it?"—"Yes. I shall have a bargain."

"That's the thing: where is it to be had, John?"—"When you are done up regularly, Jack, I'll bid for the greys; and of course you'll give a friend the preference."

He smiled, but looked uncomfortable. "Remember six," he said, as I jumped out, and he drove on.

I went to the solicitor to whom Aylmer had recommended me, and gave him instructions to find out Murphy's child; called afterwards with my agents, purchased a rose-diamond ring, and enclosed it in a long letter to my beloved Emily. Time flies fast in London—and when I had dressed and driven to the restaurateur's, it wanted but a few minutes to seven.

Jack was waiting for me; and, to escape my jobations and avoid a *tête-à-tête*, he had invited a gentleman to dine with us, whom he introduced to me as Baron Hartzmann. From the first moment of our acquaintance I bestowed upon the baron my personal dislike: he was a slight, miserable, dwarfish foreigner, greatly overdressed; his face hidden in hair, his fingers sparkling with gems, and his breast decorated with a foreign order. In his manner he was cringing and obsequious, with an eternal smile, a ready compliment, and all the pliability requisite for a finished *chevalier d'industrie*. His conversation was common-place; but Jack declared him, in a whisper, to be not only a fashionable but a very "honourable man."

In his selections from the restaurateur's *carte*, my kinsman displayed excellent judgment. The dinner was capital, the wines fair, and Jack in high spirits: all went off well, and the bottle circulated merrily. The evening wore away,—the third flask of Lafitte vanished,—the clock struck ten, and the baron reminded us of our engagement in Curzon-street. We called a bill, got a coach, drove off to Pauline's;—Jack regularly screwed; I comfortable enough: and the baron sober as a judge, and for the best reason—he was a water-drinker, as gamblers generally are.

CHAPTER IV.

PAULINE'S PARTY, AND A BLOW-UP.

"Laura was blooming still: had made the best
Of time; and time return'd the compliment,
And treated her genteelly."

Beppo.

"*Hotspur.* I will ease my heart,
Although it be with hazard of my head.
North. What! drunk with choler? Stay and pause awhile."

King Henry.

THE drawing-room which I had visited in the morning was splendidly lighted up, and the beautiful *danseuse* ready to receive us. If she was dangerously attractive when I saw her at the breakfast-table, now she was irresistible, for all that art could do to heighten the effect of her charms was done. Her dress was magnificent, her jewels costly—and, but for my perfect knowledge of her unworthiness, I should have thought Pauline one of the most exquisite specimens of Nature's handiwork that this world had ever produced.

There were two personages already in the room: one, a young and handsome Guardsman, whose air, dress, and conversation bespoke him of the highest caste. He claimed Jack as an old companion, was introduced to me, and seemed on intimate terms with Pauline. To the other I was formally presented by our hostess as Madame la Baronne Hartzmann.

The baroness did not speak English; the Guardsman was flirting with Pauline; I was consequently obliged to be agreeable to the lady, and of course commenced a *tête-à-tête;* while Jack and the little foreigner retreated to a corner of the room, and sat down to "humbug," as they call two-handed whist in Galway.

Had not the *figurante* been beside her, the baroness would have been reckoned positively handsome; but Pauline's presence reduced her sadly in the scale of beauty. Madame had never in personal attractions been comparable in her brightest days to the *danseuse*, and she was at least older by ten years; but still she was

a fine woman. Her manners were bold and careless; and, if one might judge by her conversation, her morals rather questionable. She sang and played divinely: I, of course, did duty at the piano; the Guardsman was devoted to the *danseuse;* Jack and the baron entirely engrossed in "humbug;" and after madame had sung herself hoarse, she kindly offered to teach me *écarté.* What could I do? Nothing but accept the offer; and we too, of course, took up a position in a corner, and the baroness commenced her elementary instructions in that interesting and fashionable game.

I have been stupid from the cradle—and as I seldom remembered to mark the king, and revoked continually, no wonder, although we played but for a bagatelle, that the baroness, during my initiatory progress, netted twenty pounds. I tired of *écarté,* and, after a *petit souper,* I determined to be off. Jack was a winner, and had no fancy for abdicating; the soldier was a late man, and appeared quite satisfied in doing the sentimental with Pauline. The baroness and myself, therefore, were the only rational people of the party; and as she complained of fatigue, her husband entreated me to see his lady home; a request, of course, which I readily assented to.

We drove to the baron's lodgings in Regent-street, and were let in by a sleepy-looking maid. Madame had offered me the music of a song that I had admired; and, to do her justice, she seemed most anxious to redeem her pledge,—and if I would but assist her to look through a portfolio, she would find it in a minute. The servant brought lighted candles, and left us; but to hunt out music is sometimes a tedious business—I am sure we must have passed it over a dozen times, for it was a long time before we found the song.

It was striking three as I hurried homewards. Passing through Coventry-street, two persons turned a corner so suddenly, that a smart collision was the consequence; and the footway being narrow, one of them was thrown upon the pavement, and the other forced against a shop-window. An angry discussion ensued: I apologized for the accident; but the more I endeavoured to persuade them that the mischance was unpremeditated, the more violent their wrath became. At last, the stouter of the two became so gross in his abuse, that I lost all self-command and knocked him over. A noisy brawl ended in a demand for my address; and, without consideration I was foolish enough to give a card: in truth, I was anxious to be off, and apprehensive of being accommodated with a lodging in the watch-house. But I ran little risk; the guardians of the night were too sensitive of the value of character to be found abroad when people of good morals are supposed to be asleep, and I escaped the penalty of my rashness.

Aylmer was waiting for me.

"May I inquire, Master John Blake," said the cynic, "where you have put in the night? No doubt in most agreeable society, or you would not have borrowed so liberally from the small hours of the morning."

"Surely, Aylmer," I replied, "you have not waited for me?"—"In good truth, no: I have had a long and intricate account to investigate, so ingeniously obscured by an attorney, that my Job-like patience almost gave way. But come, let me have your adventures, and those of your relative, the worthy gentleman with the alarming *sobriquet.*"

I told him all the particulars of Pauline's party, and omitted nothing but my having been in a street-row.

"Why then, Master John Blake, I grieve to say that you have spent an evening in but indifferent company, and that too upon your own showing. Of that vile dancer you know my opinion already;—your cousin is an ass—a dupe; the Guardsman, one of the innumerable butterflies that flutter on an idle town;—the baron a professional swindler, whose title is mere moonshine, and his order conferred upon him by—himself;—the lady is a travelling companion—some fourth-rate *chanteuse,* whose voice and reputation are equally broken and bad;—your own portrait I leave to be painted by yourself—and now you have the whole of the *dramatis personæ.* Considering the company you have been in, I think you have come off cheaply; although you have found *écarté* a more expensive game than *piquet;* for the baroness is too industrious to lose her time, like Lucinda Daly, in playing for kisses. Let me see, how stands the account?—you have had supper and a sheet of music, and all for twenty pounds—it is dog cheap certainly. But, what! had you and Madame Hartzmann a romping-match, or a set-to? there is blood upon your glove."

I looked. Aylmer was right, and in the late skirmish I had slightly cut my hand. It was useless to conceal the thing from my privy counsellor, and I told him the particulars.

"This, Jack, was a very silly affair. I thought you were too prudent to brawl in the streets."

I pleaded the provocation given.

"Pshaw! nonsense! If men in London noticed every drunken scoundrel whom they meet, their lives would be a continued scene of quarrelling. Then your folly in giving the fellows your card: the chances are one hundred to one that they are persons no gentleman could meet. I wonder at your simplicity! you require a Mentor as much as Jack the Devil. But his course is run; and he has been regularly cleaned out at that Jezebel's in Curzon-street."—"No; he had won fifty before I left."

"Precisely so: the common course adopted by all gentlemen of the baron's profession. A Greek invariably allows the pigeon to win, before he turns to and plucks him bare. The whole thing was settled between the parties, and the *figurante* and the swindler will divide the spoil. You were in the way, and it was necessary to get rid of you: you would have interrupted Hartzmann's game, and spoiled Pauline's flirtation. Nothing could have been more discreetly managed; and *madame la baronne* was the decoy-duck. Well, Jack, if poor Emily knew the trouble you took to find the song, or could the old boy have peeped into Curzon-street, —— But I am sleepy; and after the pleasant and profitable adventures you have gone through, I suppose your own pillow will be acceptable." We parted.

But mine was fated to be a brief repose. I had not been in bed three hours, when a loud knocking at the street-door awoke me. Before it was posssible for a servant to answer the impatient visitor, another peal thundered through the house. I thought I recognized my cousin's

voice, and scarcely had time to put on my dressing-down, before a hasty step rushed up the stairs, and by different doors, and at the same moment, Jack and I entered the drawing-room.

Morning had broken; and though the light was misty and imperfect, I started two paces back when I viewed my kinsman's countenance. Every line, every feature was distorted with rage: the lip trembled with passion; the veins were corded on the forehead; the brows had contracted till they united, and he seemed the very picture of fury and despair.

"Good God! Jack, what misfortune has occurred?"

He remained speechless. I advanced, took his hand, placed him on a chair, and seated myself beside him. Again I repeated my question. Jack paused, winced, and with an unearthly laugh replied—

"Nothing, John, nothing but what occurs to idiots daily. I am ruined—that's all!"

"Ruined, Jack! How?—speak."—"Ay, ruined! Lost every guinea I had on earth, and a thousand into the bargain."

"What, Jack! to that swindling foreigner?"—"Just so, John. After you left us the noble baron did me to a turn. The money——"

"Hang the money, Jack!" I exclaimed; "I have some hundreds at ——"

"D—n the money! that's not the thing. But to be—hell and furies! I cannot name it—deceived, deserted, robbed ——" And he sprang wildly from the chair. "I'll knock the scoundrel's brains out,—pull down the house,—proclaim that strumpet's villany,—and shoot the smooth-faced hypocrite, whom but yesterday I saved from prison." And in a tornado of passion, he stamped upon the floor like a maniac. The noise had brought down the cynic, and he united his efforts with mine to calm the distracted dupe.

"Jack, my dear fellow," I said imploringly, "do be patient."—"Patient, John! don't name the word. Did you but know what has occurred, you would not ask me to be patient."

"Come," said Aylmer, as he judiciously struck another chord, "I see how things are. You have been plundered. What boots idle lamentation? If you have been wronged, you must revenge it."—"Right, my brave fellow! Ay, that is the counsel I shall follow. Revenge! there's sweetness in the very sound!" and his eyes lightened. "Come, I will be calm—quiet as a woman. Sit down; I'll tell you all."

We obeyed him.

"You may remember, Jack, when you kindly took charge of the baroness,"—and he tried to force a smile,—"I was then a winner. From the moment you left us, luck deserted me entirely, and the cards came at the baron's call. I lost rapidly; some hundreds that I had in my note-case disappeared; but the scoundrel pressed me to play on, and I madly consented. At last we stopped—I *minus* one thousand pounds, for which Hartzmann took an acknowledgment. Soon after, having finished a flask of champagne, in a blessed frame of mind I bade Pauline 'Good night.' The baron having procured a coach, embarked in it with my friend Captain Neville, whom he had undertaken to set down.

"I walked off rapidly in an opposite direction, and from the agitation of my mind, turned a wrong corner. How many streets I wandered through, I cannot guess; but after rambling for half an hour, I found myself once more in Curzon-street; and, judge my astonishment at observing a hackney coach stop at Pauline's house, and the baron and captain alight! They were instantly admitted without knocking, and the door was shut.

"The villany of the whole party was now apparent,—the truth flashed upon me instantly; and though hell was raging in my breast, I had cunning enough not to break upon them prematurely. I waited for ten minutes, and then with a private key, let myself in, and ascended the stairs unnoticed. No wonder that my intrusion was unobserved—the footman was with Pauline and the baron in the drawing-room partitioning my bank notes, and Captain Neville coolly undressing in the lady's boudoir!

"As I looked upon the party from the landing-place, my first impulse was to annihilate them all. I felt a demon's fury, and a giant's strength: odds in numbers was nothing—the footman was a formidable fellow, but Neville was a dandy, Hartzmann a dwarf. Like a Malay running muck, I sprang into the drawing-room. Pauline screamed—the footman showed fight, but I drove him before me to the lobby, and, with a blow that might have felled an ox, sent him to the bottom of the stairs; and there he lay insensible. Where the devil the baron hid himself, I cannot fancy; for after kicking the captain out of doors, I returned to throw Hartzmann from the window; but he had vanished. The dancer had locked herself up, and was calling for assistance from the window; while I, like the demon of destruction, had the house to myself. Now that the living objects of my rage had disappeared, I vented my madness on the furniture and ornaments. Jars, clocks, busts, and pictures, I splintered with the poker; till, tired of devastation, I walked downstairs—stepped over the fellow who lay motionless at the stair-foot—flung myself into the first coach I met, and drove here to tell you that I was duped and ruined."

Poor Jack appeared calmer when he had ended. I pressed him to retire to bed and try to compose his excited feelings: but he would not stop, and said he must be at Long's, as Neville intended sending a message that morning. It was useless to argue with him; and after I had arranged to call upon him at twelve, he drove from Craven-street. As morning was well advanced, Aylmer and I were not inclined to seek our pillows again; we therefore dressed and breakfasted.

"Did I not tell you," said the cynic, "what would happen to that unlucky cousin? Egad! I would give nearly as much as you paid *la baronne* for the lesson in *écarté*, to have seen 'Jack the Devil' breaking those swindlers' heads, and trying the temper of Miss Pauline's poker upon her own porcelain afterwards. She must be a harpy of the first order. But, Lord! they're all alike—profligate by profession, and cold to everything but money. You will go to Long's of course, and lose no time in getting him out of town?'

"But that debt of honour to the baron?"—"Is in plain English, plunder to a knave. Nonsense! The scoundrel has stripped him bare enough. If he gives him anything more, let it be

"'A halter gratis; nothing else, for God's sake.'

And now for your concerns. Mind our agreement; look to Jack the Devil, and give up looking after music by candlelight. Farewell! I shall be engaged all day,—and try if you can keep out of mischief for a few hours; but I doubt both the wish and the ability."

He smiled, and left me.

At twelve precisely I hastened to Long's, to keep my appointment with my unfortunate kinsman. Jack had gone out, but desired them to say that he would return immediately. As I was anxious to get my letters, I directed the waiter to tell Captain Blake that I should wait for him at Berners-street, and proceeded thither.

Four letters had reached me by that morning's post, and a few cards were left for me; and among others Sedley's. But before I sat down to examine my correspondence, I hastily threw my eye over the *Herald*. In its columns there was nothing of moment, but a challenge to my cousin, to hop against somebody named, five hundred yards, for as many sovereigns; and an *on-dit*, stating that he had been married on the preceding day to Le Grand, at the chapel of the Spanish Ambassador. The *Post*, however, declared the report premature; as "the ceremony would not take place until Friday the 27th, being the day after Pauline's benefit; when the happy pair would leave town in a new travelling-carriage, built to order by Adams, to spend the honeymoon at Brighton."

CHAPTER V.

MORE MISFORTUNES.—THE DUEL.

"*Capt. Absolute.* 'Sdeath! I never was in worse humour in all my life.

Sir Lucius. Oh, faith? I'm in the luck of it! I never could have found him in sweeter temper for my purpose."

The Rivals.

"It has a strange quick jar upon the ear,
That cocking of a pistol, when you know
A moment more will bring the site to bear
Upon your person, twelve yards off or so.
But after being fired at once or twice,
The ear becomes more Irish, and less nice."

Don Juan.

"HEAVEN first sent letters for some wretch's aid." Pope was wrong: I deny it altogether; and agree with the honest gentleman of Connemara, who blessed God whenever he remembered "the happy times when the post came in but once a fortnight." Of my four packets I examined the superscriptions and seals. There was one despatch from Manus Blake, an epistle from my beloved Emily, a brief note from Mr. Harrison, and a billet upon coloured paper, addressed to me in a handwriting with which I was unacquainted. Need I say that Emily's was the first seal broken?

I kissed the dear letter, for through the envelope I distinctly felt a ring. It was a memorial of her love—a token that I was not forgotten. I broke the cover—Saints and devils! I found within—my own rose-diamond.

I will not transcribe the letter: it was a gentle request for me to discontinue all correspondence, and a peremptory rejection of my addresses. There were no reproaches,—no irritating allegations; but the simple remark, that one who in a day had forgotten her could not be a person to whom she could safely entrust herself for life. The letter concluded with an affectionate prayer for my prosperity and an entreaty that I should not unadvisedly injure myself with Mr. Harrison.

The tone throughout was firm, but melancholy; and I remarked that the paper in more than one spot was blistered with a tear.

I unclosed my grandfather's note. It was very coldly worded. He said that he disapproved of gambling;—that I knew already. He had heard that I was addicted to that vice, but from my assertions he was willing to discredit the story. Circumstances had changed his belief, and he requested me to meet him on the next Monday in ——, Clarges-street. He subscribed himself, "Yours, John Harrison."

I broke my uncle's next, and though the contents were no doubt in the writer's estimation very momentous, I read them, I fear, with sad indifference. My aunt had gone on a pilgrimage to Lough Dergh, and Manus was laid up with the gout. A bailiff, in attempting to serve some order of court upon the lands, had been stoned to death by the tenantry; and my uncle, from increasing annoyances, wished to leave Galway for a time. Money was wanting; but he expected to get that soon, and join Jack in London; where, as Manus stated, the heir-apparent was endeavouring to raise cash to pay off family encumbrances. God help my simple-hearted uncle! Jack the Devil was adding to family encumbrances in every way.

The fourth epistle I threw aside: it was probably a billet from the baroness, and I was in no humour for flirtation. What could be done? Drive off directly to Stainsbury, and undeceive Emily and my grandfather. I never felt more annoyed. I was at enmity with all mankind; my kinsman had not only destroyed himself, but embarrassed me with my grandfather and mistress, and at a time when it was so necessary to prove myself worthy of the old man's confidence and Emily's love. I rang the bell — the waiter answered it—and before I could give my orders, he handed me a card, and told me "Colonel O'Donnel" had called on particular business.

Now, who the deuce was Colonel O'Donnel? I never heard of him before. What did he want? I desired him to be shown up, and waited very impatiently for his appearance.

The colonel was a smart, undersized personage, who made the most of his height, and held himself straight as a halbert. He bowed formally, and with the stiffness of a quaker. The waiter handed him a chair—left us alone—and, after a cough preliminary, the visitor commenced.

"Unpleasant occurrence that of last night, Captain Blake." And he looked at my card; I bowed, and he proceeded. "I come from a friend—hem."

Here was fresh confusion. Aylmer was wrong,—they were not apprentices whom I had jostled in Coventry-street; but he was right, when he blamed me for giving a card.

"You struck my friend last night?" said the little commander.—"Yes—it was unavoidable."

"You knocked him down?"—"Admitted; but the provocation, colonel?"

"Oh! we shall not touch on delicate ground, Captain Blake." — "Curse your delicacy!" thought I.

"You are aware," continued the short commander, "that with us military men nothing justifies a blow."

"Why, d—n it, sir!"—and I waxed warm.—"And, d—n it, sir!" rejoined the little colonel, who was constitutionally hot, "the thing won't bear an argument!"

The ambassador was fire and flax, and I out of temper with the world.

"And may I ask, in one word, what have you come for, colonel?"—"A plain question requires a plain answer. A written apology; and that to be published in the newspapers."

"I won't give one."—"Then an immediate meeting is unavoidable;" and the commander bowed. "Will you refer me to a friend, Captain Blake?"

"Of course, if this is your decision."—"It is indubitably"—and the little man took snuff.

"Then, colonel, I shall save you some trouble. Name place and time, and I'll be punctual."

"Of course you come attended?"—"Of course, colonel."

"Then, as in these cases," said the commander, "delays are useless and disagreeable, if it suits you perfectly, I would propose this evening."—"Be it so—say four o'clock—and where?"

"Why," said the colonel—"my dear friend—I beg pardon—my dear sir, the north of the city is so notorious, and cockneys, through ignorance, so troublesome, that they will not permit one to transact business quietly; for, as our countryman Sir Lucius says, 'In England, if a thing gets wind, people make such a pother, that a man can't fight in peace and quietness.' Now, I prefer the Surrey side; and there is not prettier shooting-ground in Britain than the Dulwich meadows. I think I could mark off as sweet a sod there, as ever a gentleman was stretched upon."

"You are truly considerate, colonel; and my friend and I will be punctual. But where shall our rendezvous be?"

"Oh! the Greyhound. Capital house that! civil people, excellent wine, and, if a man's nicked, the greatest attention. I shall be there before you. Farewell."

I very ceremoniously saw the colonel out, and in two minutes after in came Jack the Devil.

"I should have been with you sooner, my dear John," said my cousin, "but you are aware that I shall have a call this morning. My pistols have been in the case these three months; and when I tried them, the locks were not comfortable—the oil had clogged—dull—no music in them—and I just slipped down to Charley Moore, to get him to look over them:—he's a good soul, and promised that in an hour all should be ready for me."

"I'm glad of that, Jack; I undertook to be at Dulwich at four o'clock."

"What to do there?"—"Fight somebody."

"Who?"—"Egad; I forgot to ask Colonel O'Donnel."

"Oh! that's he of the Coldstream. Well, all's right. You may depend upon it, when he brought the message, the man that you are going to meet, is a gentleman. But is it not extraordinary that Neville has not sent to me? What was your affair about, John?"—"'Faith, Jack, I can hardly tell."

"No matter; we'll talk of that again. I'll step down to Long's. D—n that fellow Neville; surely he won't let a kicking pass without a call? I'll drive here at three precisely, and have all ready. You have no objection to a saw-handle? I have a case plainly stocked, but the barrels are not so true."—"The saw-handles will do, Jack."

"Oh! very well. I'll answer for the rest. Remember, John, no signal-work—no dropping handkerchiefs—I have known the steadiest shot in Galway bothered by it;—the word's the thing, 'Ready—fire!' No mistaking that; and then a man can keep a steady eye upon his object—cover him about the hip, for you may alway allow three or four inches for the rise of a ball, no matter how correctly the pistol may be loaded."

After this friendly advice, Jack the Devil departed to see if he had any chance of a shooting-match himself; and I strolled into the Park to commune with my own thoughts, and pass the time over until my cousin called with a summons to the field.

Here I was, as unfortunate a private gentleman as England could produce. I was in a pretty series of scrapes—discarded by my mistress, suspected by my grandfather, on the eve of a duel with a man whose name I could not tell, and deliberately doing an act that Mr. Harrison had solemnly denounced, and, of course, quite certain that I should incur his lasting displeasure. To add to my misfortunes, Alymer was invisible, and I could not obtain counsel from the cynic in this my hour of need.

The coloured billet had remained neglected in my pocket. I broke the seal with indifference: it was not from the baron's helpmate, as I had supposed, but an anonymous note, apprizing me that the writer would call at nine o'clock that evening at my hotel, and requesting that I might be alone.

If one could decide a dispute upon the spot, I verily believe that every man would be a hero; but when the blood cools down to its accustomed temperature, and the strong impulse of passion subsides, it is marvellous how little inclination even a professed duellist has, to be deliberately fired at. There are men, however, who feel obliged to anybody who will accommodate them with a quarrel; and in that amiable class I would place my worthy cousin Jack the Devil.

Need I then confess, that when his greys stopped in Berners-street, I would have been better pleased that our drive was on some other errand? But the die was cast, and I had nothing but my own folly to blame,—for Jack, to give the devil his due, was innocent of this mishap altogether.

We drove over Westminster-bridge, passed the Elephant and Castle, whisked through Camberwell-green, and reached the Greyhound exactly seven minutes within four, by the clock at the Horse Guards.

Colonel O'Donnel's groom was waiting to show us the ground, as he said, "the gentlemen had slipped into the fields to avoid observation." I cursed the colonel's caution, while Jack was in raptures with his prudence. He, Jack, had often heard of him—a steady, straightforward friend; no humbug;—he thought he recollected to have seen him; if so, he was tried for his life about three years ago, for shooting his colonel by candle-light. It must be the same; and it was some pleasure to meet a man who knew how things should be done.

While Jack was delivering himself of this laudatory notice of the short commander, he was very adroitly concealing the pistol-case under his cloak —the phaeton was sent round to the yard—and, after issuing due directions to his servant touching the greys, we started for the scene of action.

"I wonder who it is we are to shoot?" said Jack the Devil.—"Or be shot by?" I responded with a sigh.

"No fear of that, John. Has there been an accident in our family these thirty years but two? and everybody knows that our grandduncle, long Dominick, would have shot Clancy, if he had not forgot his spectacles. Luck's everything—never take your eye from your man—pull when you come to the present, and I'll bet a hundred we give the coroner a job."

"Heaven forbid, Jack! It would ruin me;—if I killed him, I should be disinherited."—"Then level low and hit him in the legs. Heighho! I should like to get an inventory of the articles I smashed at Pauline's. Zounds! it would make a saint swear, to think that for a petty squabble, you will have the pleasure of shooting at a scoundrel that only elbowed you in the street; while I, under such provocation, must be contented with breaking a footman's bones, and demolishing a room-full of trumpery."

As he spoke we mounted a stile; and, in the corner of a large grass-field, observed two persons in waiting, who we concluded were the aggrieved one and his friend. We were not astray; for, on approaching them, the little commander advanced uncovered, and Jack was equally polite. For my part, I felt no fancy to exhibit a bare head to a gentleman I intended laming for life; and indeed my opponent appeared equally unsocial, for he turned his back and walked slowly off. I strove to catch a glimpse of his features, but he was so closely enveloped in a box-coat, that it failed me totally.

Our companions were not idle, but went to work like men of business. The amenity of manner that marked their intercourse was delightful, while their politeness would have put a master of ceremonies to the blush.

"I think this is as sweet a spot," said the little man, "as we could find upon the field;—shall we mark distance from this glove?" and he laid one of his white kid-skins on the ground.

"We'll place the gentlemen, if you please, colonel," responded Jack the Devil, "across the ridge, and not leave any line to direct the eye."—"Precisely so." And the commander smiled graciously.

"Do you fight at ten or twelve?" inquired my cousin, and his bow was superb.—"Why, faith!" said the colonel, "personally, I prefer *ten;* but I fancy *twelve* is the favourite distance,—and one must go with the world, you know." And the gentlemen interchanged an innocent laugh.

"Allow me to tell-off the ground," said my kinsman, "and you can correct the paces after me."—"Lord, by no means?—quite certain of your accuracy;" and Jack stepped over the grass as gingerly as a dancing-master. Confound him! he seemed crippled; I had seen him take a stride of twice the length in crossing a dirty sweeping.

The colonel turned to me.

"Perfect gentleman your friend there—*au fait* at his arrangements. With a *leetle* more experience, there would not be a prettier second in England. We may regulate the tools," he continued, as my cousin returned after sticking a twig into the turf, twelve paces from the colonel's kid-skin; and the commander proceeded to unlock a mahogany-box, hitherto concealed under an opera-cloak.

"What a nice fellow that major is, John!—a regular trump. I'll take my oath he's the man that was tried for murder." And he too opened his case, and the friends extracted a weapon each from their respective depositories. The colonel handed a pistol to my kinsman, who in return presented his to the short commander.

"Could you execute with that *Standenmeyer?*" said the little man.—"Beautifully balanced!" responded Jack the Devil. "But I am more accustomed to the saw-handles."

"Sweet lock that of Mortimer!" and every click went through me like a small sword. There they were, bandying compliments, and criticising "back action," as coolly as if chatting in a shooting-gallery.

"Shall we load the case?" quoth Jack.—"I think we had better, as your friend is not disposed to apologise: it will save trouble, and bring the affair sooner to an end."

"The devil take both!" thought I. From the extent of their preparations, it was quite evident that it would not be any fault of theirs, if the sulky gentleman or myself was not, as they say in Connaught, "left quivering on a daisy."

I never saw men more expeditious. The pistols were loaded,—the firing signal agreed upon,—and a sovereign tossed for choice of ground and word. Jack won that honour, and he placed me with my right toe directly behind the commander's white kidskin.

The colonel was equally attentive to my adversary: he assisted him to take off his great-coat, and then put him on his ground.

"Be steady, now!" said Jack the Devil, in a whisper. I fixed my eye upon my opponent. Holy Saint Patrick! the first glance showed me a man I had never differed with in my life—it was Neville of the Guards!

Jack broke silence. "Stop, colonel; there's some mistake."—"None in the world, my dear fellow," replied the short commander.

"Why, these gentlemen have no cause of quarrel!" exclaimed Jack.—"Oh, abundant!" said the soldier.

"I tell you they have not."

"Why, d——n it, sir! was there not a kicking-match in Curzon-street?"—"Ay; but there was another in Coventry-street."

"'Pon honour, gentlemen, the thing is most incomprehensible. Will you, sir,"—and he addressed himself to me,—"inform me if it be your intention to fire at my friend?"—"I assure you, sir," I replied, "I have not the most remote intention of doing so."

"Then, sir, who the devil did you come out to fight?"—"Nobody that I see here, sir."

"Are you, sir, Captain John Blake?"—"I am, —and there is another"—and I pointed to my kinsman.

"That is the person who insulted me," said Neville to his friend.

"Well, well; the thing is easily remedied. Had it been half an hour later, we might have had a shot or two, before we found the true man. Ah! that puts all right,"—for Jack and I had

changed places. "And now, gentlemen, are you ready?"

Both answered in the affirmative. The little man took out his snuff-box, and nodded politely to me. I gave the word,—Pop—pop—went the pistols—and down went Mr. Neville of the Guards!

CHAPTER VI.

FEMALE VISITORS.

"Stand by; pray, gentlemen, stand by! Lord have mercy upon us! did you never see a man run through the body before?"

Trip to Scarborough.

"*Ros.* Why did he swear he would come this morning and came not?

Cel. Nay, certainly, there is no truth in him.

Ros. Do you think so?

Cel. Yes. I think he is not a pick-purse, nor a horse-stealer, but, for his verity in love, I do think him as concave as a covered goblet, or a worm-eaten nut."

As You Like It.

WHEN Neville fell, I rushed forward and raised him in my arms. The commander's systematic precision of bearing during an affair of honour, prevented any exhibition of haste upon his part; and I verily believe that he would not have lengthened his military stride of two-and-thirty inches, to have succoured both the combatants, had they been *in articulo mortis* on the sod. Jack, to do him justice, forgot all feelings but the kindliest, and came promptly to my aid. We found that Neville had been shot through both legs; and the colonel and I bandaged the wounded limbs with our pocket handkerchiefs, while Jack ran to the Greyhound, and brought our own servants and a chair to carry the sufferer off the field. Surgical assistance was obtained,—Neville put to bed,—and, as the hæmorrhage was stopped, and the bones were uninjured, we left the patient in a fair way of recovery.

We returned to town in Jack's phaeton—for he remained at Dulwich, until some of his antagonist's friends should arrive,—and consequently the little colonel and I drove *tête-à-tête* to London. Nothing could exceed his admiration of my kinsman. "He is really a most promising lad—excellent idea of field management—and his shooting beautiful! By the way, my dear boy,—you will, I know, forgive me,—but you were a *leetle* hurried. Never run your words one into another,—leave four seconds between your 'ready —fire.' Observe the consequence;—your friend, instead of drilling mine, six inches under the hip-bone, would have been into him about the third rib. Your rapidity, my dear fellow, spoiled a splendid shot. But it's as well as it is, and saves some trouble; for in England, when a man's nicked, they make such a rout about the thing. I am delighted with your cousin: I would take him out, were I going to fight in a sawpit."

The conversation turned to the causes of the quarrel, of all which, excepting the assault, the colonel was profoundly ignorant. He listened with great attention, and entered with marked interest into the detail I gave him of Jack's misfortunes. I told him unreservedly all I knew of the affair at Pauline's.

"By heaven!" said the commander, "it is a thousand pities that, when he was smashing bones, he did not dislocate the dancer's ankle, and break the baron's back. Why, they are an infernal gang: but this poor boy must be looked after, and these swindlers obliged to disgorge their plunder. Here, my dear friend, put me down at the corner; you'll find me always at home to *you* in Jermyn-street:" and he gave me a card. "Now *do* call—I am a man of few professions; but I like you well, and your cousin better; and in storm or sunshine, remember you have a friend in town, and depend on Mick O'Donnel." He squeezed my hand, and we parted.

The colonel was a singular character—a stout ally, and a determined enemy. On every subject but duelling, he was rational; and excepting the extravagant opinions he entertained of what he termed honour, the man was acute and intelligent.

It was past seven when I reached Berners-street. Dinner, according to my directions, was served in a private room; and over my wine I awaited the evening interview appointed by my anonymous correspondent. As a departed Irishman, of jovial memory, used to say, I felt "an unquenchable thirst,"—was feverish, excited, and unhappy,—just in that reckless state of mind, that a man under great embarrassment will feel himself. A clock on the mantelpiece told the quarters,—eight struck,—one, two, three chimed —and the waiter entered to say that a lady in a hackney-coach inquired for me. She was instantly shown up; and, wrapped in a large travelling cloak, the *incognita* entered.

Great was my curiosity. Who could the unknown be? Confound the cloak! it concealed her altogether. Nothing but an ankle was visible; and, faith! it was a pretty one. I handed her a chair, pressed her to be seated, and casually observed, that "I had had the honour to receive her note."

"Indeed, you had no such honour," said a well-remembered voice, as the visitor threw aside her muffling, and disclosed the features of my old friend Phœbe.

"Good God! is it possible? What a surprise! I thought it was——"

"One of your city sultanas!"—and she flung away my hand, and looked at me with marked displeasure.

"What is the matter, Phœbe?"—"Can you ask the question, sir?"—and her eyes flashed with anger. "Ah, captain, was it not an honourable exploit to win the affections of the most artless being that ever was swindled of her heart by a scoundrel? You might have at least allowed a second day to pass, after you swore eternal constancy before you lacerated her feelings by an open exhibition of your profligacy."

"Phœbe! what, in the fiend's name, are you dreaming of?"—"I am not dreaming; nor will your assurance fool me, sir. You, who would deceive an unsuspecting girl, when you were the paramour of an infamous *dancer*, the associate of blacklegs,—a gambler—a debauchee——"

"Phœbe! are you leagued with all the world to drive me into lunacy? I tell you, I am innocent,—Emily is deceived, my grandfather misled, and you unjust."

A smile of bitter incredulity played over her handsome face, as I continued solemnly,—

"You wrong me—you do, by Heaven! I am not the person whose name has been before the

world,—whose follies have been bruited about, and, most unfortunately, fathered upon me."

Phœbe looked at me. "Would that I dare credit you! Were your words true, how much misery would be spared to that devoted and heart-broken girl, who now believes that you are false, and she forsaken."—"By my soul's hope, I am innocent!"

"Oh, convince me, and I shall be too, too happy!"—"Phœbe, you loved my mother tenderly: by her dear memory, I am wronged,—foully, grossly wronged! Hear me, and judge if I be guilty."

I briefly explained to her that Jack was the delinquent.

"I believe it—God be praised!" and tears rolled down her cheek. I took her hand, and sealed our reconciliation with a kiss.

"I suppose that is intended for Miss Emily?" and her *espiègle* features resumed their customary archness.—"Ay, Phœbe, take this one too. You know, you can deliver both at the same time."

"Well, well, we have no time for kissing: I came off, unknown even to poor Emily, to ascertain if you were the *roué* you have been represented. Had you any letter from Mr. Harrison?"—"I had a brief notice, that he would be in town the day after to-morrow."

"He is on his road—Sedley and Miss Emily accompany him. Can you guess the object of his journey?"—"Not exactly, Phœbe."

"Only to disinherit you, and marry your mistress to your rival."—"Then they shall—if Emily loves me—first step over my corpse, before they reach the altar!"

"Love you!" exclaimed Phœbe; "she loves you devotedly. Your grandfather may alienate your inheritance, but not her heart. You must see her immediately."

"How shall I effect that?"—"Easily; I will manage it. To-morrow they stop at St. Albans, excepting Sedley, who proceeds to town to have all things ready for their reception next day in Clarges-street. Come after dark to the Verulam Arms, and when the old man retires for the night, you and your fair mistress may settle plans of mutual disobedience"—and she laughed.

"But where is that vixen Annette?"—"Safe in London, getting the house aired and planning mischief. There is none with Miss Emily, but Susan, and she is faithful. Have you done anything in Sedley's business?"

"I have: an efficient agent is at work, and with good prospect of succeeding."—"Well, I must leave you."

"So soon, Phœbe?"—"Yes; for I will not sleep until I whisper peace to the gentlest sufferer that ever anchored her happiness by that rope of sand—the constancy of an Irishman!"

I caught Phœbe in my arms to exact the penalty of her libel on my faith; and, after arranging my visit to St. Albans, she took leave of me and drove off.

It struck nine before my mother's *confidante* departed; the first chime tinkled from the mantel, and still the lady of the coloured billet had not appeared. My interview with Phœbe had lightened my bosom of its load,—"I breathed again," and hope succeeded to despair. Another chime from the chimney-piece,—the *incognita* was a false one. No matter; I eschewed temptation, and determined to set out for Craven-street and report progress to Aylmer. To-morrow night I should again meet Emily. I thought of it with rapturous delight; rose,—took my hat,—when the door opened, a lady was announced; and in came the fair visitor.

I never was more surprised: she was totally unknown — young, handsome, and brilliantly dressed, as if for an evening party. I am ashamed to say, that I was far from being at my ease; and as to the lady, whatever the errand was that brought her here, her courage entirely vanished, for her cheeks were deeply coloured, and her eyes cast upon the carpet. There was no affectation in her timidity. Had I achieved a conquest? it certainly looked like it; and for a few moments I began to fancy that I was rather a dangerous person to admit to the society of gentlewomen who were constitutionally susceptible. But a minute more, and I discovered that I was not the lady-killer I had believed myself.

"Madam——"

"Sir——"

"May I inquire if this visit be to me?"

"Are you, sir, Captain Blake?"—"Yes, ma'am; but there are two captains of that name."

"I know it, sir. You are in the Rifles?"—"I was lately, ma'am; but am now a Fusileer."

"Your cousin resides at Long's, and is called in London 'the Sporting Captain——'"—"And in Ireland, 'Jack the Devil.'"

"God bless me! for what, sir?"—"Nothing, madam, but to distinguish him from me. I am moral and grave,—and Jack's spirits are at times considered by strangers a little too exuberant."

"You are Captain Blake's next kinsman?"—"I have that honour, madam. May I offer you a glass of wine?" The lady politely declined it.

"Or coffee, madam?"—"Neither, sir. This visit will, to use the mildest term, appear intrusive from a person you never saw before."

"Forgive me, madam. From one so pretty, a visit is an honour; and surely I have seen that handsome face before?"

The lady smiled archly. "Yours, captain, is the country of compliment. May I ask where we met?"—"Why, 'faith, ma'am, I cannot at this moment precisely say. The place may have escaped my memory; but that face, once seen, is not to be forgotten."

"I am come, sir, to——" And she stopped.

"Madam, if in any way I can be serviceable, command me."

"May I repose unlimited confidence in you—known to me by character well, but in all else a stranger?"—"You may, upon my life, madam."

"Then, sir, your country and profession shall be guarantees for your honour. Captain Blake, you are about to hear the confession of a weak and romantic girl."

She blushed to the very eyes, and I felt rather queer. Hang it! I had destroyed her piece of mind, and I was unable to recollect where the deuce I did the mischief.

"To confess to you the secret of my heart—to own that I have placed my affections on one——" She stopped. Poor soul! I pitied her embarrassment, and endeavoured to restore her confidence.

"I acknowledge your kindness, captain; but this is weakness—and——" Another pause. The declaration was coming,—and I felt for the

sweet girl, when she should learn that I could not return her passion.

"You will call me foolish—mad, when I tell you my hopes of earthly happiness are centred in one——" Another pause: it was intolerable.

"Name him, madam!—name him, for God's sake!"

"——, whom the world calls dissipated, immoral, and extravagant."

"The world is wrong, madam," I exclaimed warmly; "and it is a shame for the world to——"

"Ah, Captain Blake! our feelings are the same. We are blind to the foibles of those we love; and you would, if possible, excuse your cousin's wildness."

"My cousin's wildness, madam?"

"And yet, I own to you, his relative and friend, that, faulty as he is, I love him."

"What, madam! love Jack the Devil?"—"Ay, even by that alarming name!"

Here was a mistake—death to my vanity! if there was a broken heart, Jack was the delinquent.

"Madam, my cousin is a happy man."

"Would that he thought so!" said the lady, with a sigh. "But my visit here, no doubt, has created with my father's servants some surprise, and a longer stay would but increase it. Will you accompany me to Drury Lane, where we have a private box to-night? and, as we shall drive round by Portland Place, there will be time to explain everything I wish."

"I shall be delighted, madam;" and I rose to hand her to the carriage. I looked at her attentively: she was indeed a charming girl. Suddenly I recollected her face; I had seen her at the opera, and my fair visitor was the director's daughter.

We drove off. "I shall be brief," said Miss Moreland, "I was last winter in Dublin, on a visit to my aunt, and there I first met your kinsman: there our flirtation commenced, and last autumn it was renewed at Cheltenham. Captain Blake has since been a visitor in town. With my mother he is a favourite, as she thinks his wildness merely the outbreakings of youth, and that time will correct his errors. My father holds a different opinion, and pronounces your cousin irreclaimable.

"It is unnecessary for me to say more, than that for me he has professed an ardent attachment, and that I am weak enough to believe him. I know the difficulties under which his father labours, and that the fortune, to which in a few months, in my own right, I must succeed, would be to a distressed gentleman no trifling object. But he has candidly acquainted me with his family embarrassments, and proudly declined to marry me. Now, why does this attach me to him? because I know that he has rejected the hand of a wealthier heiress, which was unequivocally offered him by the owner. Would he but show any promise of reformation, my father could easily relieve his family estates from all their incumbrances: but, alas! every paper proclaims some fresh proof of his dissipation, and I fear the hold I once had upon his heart is gone. I know that he has been exposed to the witcheries of a fascinating woman; and, irritated by a paragraph in a newspaper, that named the day on which he was to wed her, in a fit of anger I wrote him his dismissal."

"Confound her, the Jezebel!" I ejaculated with a sigh; "that vixen, also, got me the rout."

"Were you *too* an admirer?"—"Not I, madam; I'm a perfect Joseph—a man of snow—and my cousin's delinquencies, may God forgive him! have fallen upon me. But, my dear lady, that *liaison* is ended—if there be faith in broken china, Jack's delusion is over—and, if you would permit him, at your feet he would recant his errors, and assure you of his determination to amend."

"Then why did he not meet me in the Park at four? I told you I had a woman's weakness to expose; and, shall I confess it? after his dismissal was despatched, I cried all night; and with the first light of morning wrote to say that I would see him once more, and allow him to persuade me that all I had heard of his gallantries was untrue, and that he was constant as a turtle."

"He could not meet you, my dear girl, to-day."

"No; for he was probably driving out that——" And she shook her pretty head passionately.—"Indeed he was not," I replied.

"Then he was riding a race, or perpetrating some other folly?"—"He was——"

"Where?"—"At Dulwich."

"And could he not have chosen another day to look at pictures?"—"He was not in the gallery."

"Where was he then?"—"In the meadows."

"The meadows! What was he doing there?"—"Why, d—n it! madam, I suppose all will be in the morning papers,—he was shooting at a Guardsman."

"Heavens! go on, sir."

"And, if Colonel O'Donnel can be credited, I spoiled a beautiful shot, and Jack the Devil hit him in the legs, instead of drilling him through the pericardium."

"And, sir—what are the consequences?"—"Nothing very momentous. The surgeon has got a patient—the Greyhound a customer—and the only loser is Pauline, who has suffered heavily in character and china."

"Well—is not a woman to be pitied, who embarks her happiness in the same venture with an Irishman? teased by his unsteadiness, and tortured by his pugnacity."—"But, Miss Moreland, what could induce you to trust me so confidentially? I am a stranger."

"No, no; I have for hours talked of you with your cousin—laughed over your earlier adventures—made love with you in the militia—crossed in your company the field of Waterloo—and knew that in you his confidence, his regard, was so entire, that if any on earth could reclaim him, you were that person."—"No;—that my sweet friend, shall be your task. Well, between us, we will save him. But the carriage stops, and I must say farewell."

"Will you not come to our box for a few minutes? My mother dined out; but before now she has arrived at the theatre. I wish to introduce her to my *new relative*,"—and she smiled archly.—"No, my dear girl, I cannot: important business of my own, and of your favourite, my worthy kinsman, obliges me to leave you."

"Promise me then to call at Portland-place early to-morrow."—I did so—named the hour—kissed my new cousin on the strength of our

relationship—jumped into a hackney-coach, and found the cynic in Craven-street very anxiously expecting my return.

CHAPTER VII.

FRESH TROUBLE.—STREATHAM.—SOPHIA MORELAND.

"If any man doubt that, let him put me to my purgation. I have trod a measure; I have flattered a lady; I have been politic with my friend, smooth with mine enemy; I have undone three tailors; and I have had four quarrels."

As You Like It.

"*Berinthia.* Consider, I'm a woman, and form resolutions accordingly.

Amanda. Well, my opinion is, form what resolution you will, matrimony will be the end on't."

Trip to Scarborough.

DURING a faithful narrative of the warlike and amatory achievements in which I had been engaged since I had separated from my Mentor, Aylmer exhibited unqualified surprise.

"Upon my life, Mister John Blake, from this interesting detail of your recent exploits, I am half persuaded that the world has gone mad by consent, and that I too am included in the general lunacy. While I have been in two hells and a spunging-house, endeavouring to save you from destruction, you have spent your time pleasantly enough in fighting and flirtation,—shooting at honest gentlemen before you know their names, and assisting *la baronne supposée* in her innocent researches through the music-stand. That you are mad, is certain; and, judging from symptoms, I am little better: *I*—imagining it possible to extricate you from one great difficulty, when you plunge into fresh ones when they occur,—and when they do not, you create them. Indeed, Jack, the sooner you provide a keeper, the safer for all parties; and certainly the rest of the company must be looked after. The colonel should be sent to the hulks,—your kinsman to the colonies,—the baron to the treadmill,—and the ladies to a penitentiary. As to the director's daughter, nothing can save her but bread and water and an asylum. If ever woman was demented since the days of Ophelia, she is. What! she would reclaim the wanderer, and reform the rake? She loves him, I suppose, as Puff says, 'from having heard his character, or seen his picture; or from knowing he was the last man in the world she ought to be in love with; or for any other good female reason.'—But I should not wonder at her folly: now-a-days, the more incorrigible a fellow is, the more certain is his success with women. Miss Moreland is, of course, no exception to the rest of her sex. If Jack the Devil had shot that other fool in Dulwich fields, she would have flown with him to a cell; and if he carries off her own maid, the whole city police would not restrain her from flying to his arms."

I laughed at the cynic's severity.

"Pshaw! Alymer, you are more irritated against the fair than ever. Remember that all are not descendants from the Conqueror."—"No; but they all inherit the mischief of their great progenitrix, mother Eve."

"By the way, what has become of that estimable personage, the Lady Agnes? Is the old *millionaire* alive?"—"Peter is dead as Julius Cæsar; and his lady, as miserable as I wish, and she deserves to be."

"Indeed, Aylmer!"

"Ay, Jack, my prognostic touching the disposition of the old opium-dealer's effects was, I am happy to inform you, fully realized. Beyond her jointure,—a wretched five hundred a year, and that too contingent on her remaining single,—Sir Peter did not bequeath her ladyship ten pounds to buy a mourning-ring,—no, not even a carriage or a silver spoon. His entire wealth was divided among nieces and nephews. A new generation has been formed—dressmakers become heiresses, and sadlers' apprentices fashioned into men of *ton*. As to that scoundrel her brother, he has gone regularly to the dogs: expatriated from debt and poverty, he drags out life in a small Dutch town—and sometimes so hard-up, that the gallant earl wants money to clear scores with his *blanchisseuse*. But as to your affairs,—is it not intolerable that, when I have almost effected my great object, and obtained the means of re-establishing you with your relative, you should mar all, and madly risk his displeasure? Hear me,—I have discovered Sedley's confederate,—him of whom Phœbe spoke. He is at this moment in a lock-up house for a paltry debt of twenty pounds, from which his quondam friend cannot, or will not, relieve him. I have nearly bought him over; and if I succeed in it, Sedley is undone. Evelyn comes here betimes to-morrow—then we finally arrange our plans; and in twenty-four hours I will save you, if you do not ruin yourself."

After some general conversation we parted company.

Next day, although our breakfast was an early one, before it terminated Evelyn was announced. I never saw a more finished picture of early debauchery than the appearance this wretched man presented;—a hollow cheek—a faded and leaden-coloured complexion—an eye sparkling dimly with the effects of strong stimulants, showed that dissipation had done its work. The teacup shivered in his hand: he was a wretched wreck—an undone drunkard. Aylmer started with him immediately in a hackney-coach; and before their carriage cleared the street, another entered it, and stopped at the door.

The steps fell with the rattle of a hurried passenger, and, unannounced, in came Jack the Devil.

Jack, to do him justice, was certainly a handsome fellow; and, God knows how! he had acquired that decided ease which stamps the gentleman. I remarked that his dress was careless to a degree; but there was an air—a *manière* real and decided about him, that told his caste. The Galway aristocracy not being purposed for filling places about court, are not, generally, the most polished of the community; but Jack's gentility it was impossible to mistake, and I began to fancy that the director's daughter was not just so mad as the cynic endeavoured to persuade me she was.

My kinsman was *triste* and dejected, and no effort could conceal his inquietude. Was Neville dead? I made a rapid inquiry, and found that the wounded man was convalescent. Jack farther added that Pauline would decamp after her benefit,—the footman's collar-bone was uniting,—and the baron particularly urgent for a bond or post-obit for a thousand he had won. He was farther

pleased to intimate that, under all circumstances, he intended retiring for a few days to the country, and that he should feel obliged if I would manage in his absence some matters amatory and honourable.

"And, my dear Jack, what has produced this discreet scheme on your part?"

There was great embarrassment in his look.

"Come, what has occurred? out with it."—"Why, 'faith! the truth is, that scoundrel Hartzmann carried my I. O. U. to my own coach-maker to raise money on it; and he—d—n these fellows! they are all alike,—plunder one first, pounce on him afterwards:—he, thinking matters looked blue, attempted to arrest me."

"Well, and how did you escape?"—"Why, the waiters—fellows I had paid munificently,—the scoundrels sold me."

"Go on, Jack."

"I had just dressed. My own servant was gone out; and in descending the stairs he saw in the lobby a bailiff and his follower in deep consultation with a man who was my favourite attendant. Enough transpired to tell him that I was betrayed. He returned; but so quickly did they follow, that he had scarcely time to apprise me of my danger and I to turn the key in the lock. Well, they thundered outside, and threatened to break in the door; and I swore in reply that I would shoot the first man that entered. At last the hinges began to yield, and I waxed desperate. The second pistol we did not require at Dulwich unfortunately remained loaded. A kick, like a donkey's, nearly drove in the door—I called to Pat in Irish to drop upon the lobby;—he fell flat as a flounder, and I fired through the centre panel. The thieves!—they have more lives than a cat,—the ball rattled between their heads—shivered the wood-work to pieces—knocked down a yard of plaster behind, and covered them with a shower of mortar. Away they went, head over heels—Pat Brady with kicks accelerating their movements. I took the same opportunity; and, while the Philistines ran off for assistance, I bolted into Conduit-street, jumped into a coach,—and here I am!"

"And hence you must depart *instanter!* Where will you go to, Jack!"—"Egad! you puzzle me. No matter,—call a coach, and we will consult on that afterwards."

I rang the bell—a chariot was procured—Jack jumped in, I followed, and away we went over Waterloo Bridge.

My kinsman was in tribulation,—his losses *éclated*—his tradesmen on the alert—himself without a guinea; and as to his affairs, like the "audit" of Hamlet's father, "how they stood, none knew save Heaven."

We drove to Streatham Common, and stopped at the Red Lion; and here we decided that Jack should remain *perdu*, until some arrangement with his creditors should render concealment unnecessary. I was sorry that circumstances obliged me to leave him; for even his reckless spirit had given way, and he appeared to feel acutely on other subjects besides his embarrassments. His pride had received a mortal wound—he was a fallen star in the high and palmy sphere of fashion; and when I rose and told him I must return to London, he became deeply affected, and I perceived a tear trickling down his cheek. But this weakness was momentary, and Jack was mortified that I had observed it.

"D—n it! John—I would not for five hundred that any man in England had seen me so womanly as I must appear to you; but so many causes of annoyance crowd upon me—so many evidences of past folly rise in judgment, that I wish Neville had made a better shot, and rid me of a life that has become almost intolerable."

"Pshaw! my dear boy. Is this manly—to give in because some trifling mishaps have crossed you?"

"No; hang it! John, I am not the man to sit down and cry because Fortune has played the jade. It is another cause that tortures me. There is a secret that I wished you to know, and that I intended telling, had the d—d rackety life I have latterly led permitted a quiet opportunity. Sit down, and listen for five minutes. I am attached to a woman, and there exists, or rather existed, a reciprocal regard. You have never seen her; but she is young, handsome, accomplished, and wealthy. I paid my addresses to her—they were received, and I came to London actually to wed her. Curse on that fascinating Jezebel, Pauline! in an evil hour I met her; she persuaded me I was beloved, and, step by step, led me on to ruin. Miss Moreland heard of my visits to Curzon-street; and those infernal newspapers, for want of something to fill up their columns, brought my name into notice, and chronicled my peccadilloes. My mistress, naturally enough, resented these infidelities: she was piqued,—remonstrated, and we quarrelled. An absurd point of honour on my part prevented me from avowing my faults, and promising reformation: for in private I was dying for an opportunity to break Pauline's fetters, and throw myself at Sophia's feet—abandon my fashionable follies, and marry a woman whom I loved, and fancied that I was beloved by. Alas! John, that hour of wisdom was procrastinated—the infernal blow-up at Curzon-street brought on a crisis I had not anticipated—and at the very moment when I was penitent, and willing to forswear my former follies, I received a letter from Miss Moreland, declaring our engagement off, and bidding me an eternal farewell. There, John—there lies the arrow that galls me most—the wound that rankles deepest. All else is nothing; they could be easily got over. My debts are not a thousand pounds—I could raise the money in a week. As to my losses to the baron——"

"Pshaw! the fellow is a common swindler: don't speak of him, Jack."

"Well, John, I am sure you will oblige me;—my request is but a trifle, but I could not confide it to a stranger. I have written to Sophia merely to take leave, and assuring her, notwithstanding appearances may make the assertion doubtful, that I leave England deeply and devotedly attached. I cannot expect she will believe me; but now, when separated for ever, I feel that I shall never love another so well."

Jack paused. I never thought he could have been half so serious.

"There is another request I would make. This miniature, which was given in happier times, she desires may be returned. Take it, John—give it to her with my best love. If she would but let me keep it, when far away, I should often look upon its lovely lineaments, and curse the in-

fatuation that robbed me of the original. In this packet are contained the picture, with her letters: she never asked them from me, but a point of honour tells me, no matter how anxiously I should wish to preserve them as dear memorials of the past, that they should be surrendered. You will see her, John, personally—will you not?"—"I will, Jack, before another hour."

I looked at my poor kinsman; but he avoided my eyes, and walked to the window. He was reclaimable, after all! for though Jack the Devil had but a sorry head, as we say in Ireland, "the heart was in the right place."

I left him in tolerable spirits and drove into town. To destroy any trace to Jack's retreat, I discharged the coach in Parliament-street, took another at Charing-cross, and on my way to Portland-place, determined to visit Colonel O'Donnel, and apprise him of his friend's misfortunes.

He was at home, and with all the eccentricity of his character entered warmly into the affair. Could my cousin have risen in his estimation, the dashing style in which he ejected the officers at Long's would have done it effectually.

"Upon my conscience that young man is a credit to our country! Is it not abominable to think that at the order of a rascally mechanic, a bailiff intrudes upon the sacred precincts of a gentleman's dressing-room! I remember once, when a younker in country quarters, a barbarian and his assistant made an attempt upon my personal liberty. I was sitting, sir, at the breakfast-table, and the first weapon I could lay hands on was the poker. It had fortunately been forgotten in the fire for half an hour, and, of course, was red as my own jacket. At the second pass the chief scoundrel bolted like a lamplighter, and I was only able to touch the follower *a posteriori*, as he followed through the door;—egad! I think I hear the phiz. The fellow bellowed like a bull and the visit was never repeated."

"Would you, colonel, if not particularly engaged, drive down and dine at Streatham?"—"Were I tenfold more so than I am," said the short commander, "I would forego it to comfort my excellent young friend. One thing I would request,—and that is, that nobody shall interfere in Hartzmann's affair until you hear from me."

"You shall have the baron to yourself, colonel." And I left the short commander, to call upon my cousin's mistress.

I was set down in Portland-place,—conducted by a black footman to the front drawing-room, and left *tête-à-tête* with Miss Moreland, who issued peremptory orders to the sable functionary "to be denied to all."

"Well, gallant captain, have you appeared at last? For an hour I have been taxing you with forgetfulness; and every chime I reckoned from the church clock half persuaded me that there was 'nothing but roguery in villainous man.'"

"Alas! how wronged and libelled are our sex! Here am I, Cupid's own messenger, with more *billets-doux* in my pocket than the postman delivers on 'Saint Valentine's Day.'"—"Indeed! Well—I did wrong you."

"I have already driven a dozen miles—heard the confessions of a desponding swain—kept an assignation with the prettiest girl in Portland-place—and yet am I accused of being a tardy courier?"

"I cry your mercy, gallant sir. Have you seen your cousin?"—"I have, madam; and a more unhappy Irish gentleman could not be found within the bills of mortality. I left him not an hour since, melancholy as a 'lover's lute.' Here are my despatches." And I gave Jack's billet and packet.

She broke the seal, cast her eyes hastily over the letter, and turned pale as death.

"And is he gone?—left me for ever! and, worse than in anger, believing that he was forsaken, and I forsworn!—Ah! Captain Blake, you should have prevented this."

"What, my sweet girl?"—"Your kinsmen has left London, and——"

"Only waits permission from the lady of his love—to come back again."

"Why, he takes leave of me, and returns my letters and picture."—"And yet, before a week, I hope he will be owner of the original."

Sophia blushed deeply. "Come, dear Captain Blake, tell me all; for indeed I have been very wretched."—"And so has he. In a word, your letter of recall by some accident miscarried, and he still believes himself a discarded suitor."

"And how does he bear that visitation?" she asked, with a look full of *espièglerie*.—"Why, 'faith! with far less philosophy than I should have supposed."

"Then I have some hold upon his heart?"—"Indeed, my sweet friend, you have. I would not deceive you and, on my soul! I believe my cousin's love is ardent and sincere, and that you may safely confide your happiness to his keeping."

"Do you say so?"—and her eyes sparkled with delight.—"I do."

"And *how* am I to keep him?"—"Do you ask me for advice which you intend to follow?" and I looked at her laughingly.

"Why—ye-es—that is, if your counsel jumps with my own humour, and you recommend me to do exactly what I should like to do myself."

"Marry him."

"Umph! that requires consideration—and I'll think of it till to-morrow, and tell you the result."—"You need not. I'll save you some trouble, and tell you."

"Go on, Mr. Conjurer."—"You'll follow my advice to the letter." We both laughed.

"When will your kinsman see me, confess his wanderings, and——"

"Seal his pardon with a kiss. I shall answer that question in the Irish way—by asking another. Will you drive with me a short distance out of town in the morning?"

"What with a dashing Fusileer! Would our intended affinity and cousinship save my fair fame?"—"You must run chance."

"Then I suppose I may venture. What hour will you meet me at my milliner's?"—I named twelve.

"Well—one question more. What road do we travel?"—Not the *Northern* one. My kinsman will shortly move in that direction. Adieu, pretty one!"

I left her, satisfied of her admirer's truth, and fully persuaded that Mark Antony, of tender memory, was but a truant in love compared with Jack the Devil.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ARREST.—A SPUNGING-HOUSE, AND AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"*Hostess.* Do your offices—do your offices, Master Fang and Master Snare."

Henry IV.

"The time was once, when thou unurged wouldst vow,
That never words were music to thine ear—
That never object pleasing in thine eye—
That never touch were welcome to thine hand—
That never meat sweet savour'd in thy taste,
Unless I spake, look'd, touch'd, or carv'd to thee."

Comedy of Errors.

I DROVE to Long's, and found all there in marvellous confusion. My cousin's morning exploit had created a grand sensation throughout the establishment, and was the subject of conversation at every table in the coffee-room. I was soon noticed by the waiters, and to avoid observation, requested the chief attendant to show me to Jack's room.

"Sad business this, sir! Captain Blake, sir!—quite the gentleman—but fear, sir—a little rash, sir, and may get into trouble."—"There is no doubt upon the subject, my friend; into trouble Captain Blake has gotten."

"Lord, sir! look at the door,—a hole you could put your hand through!"—"Why, yes, the panel is something the worse."

"But the danger, sir. I might have been answering a bell, and passing the lobby, sir;—the ball might have hit me, and then——"

"You would have been 'past praying for;' and Long obliged to put you in the bill, as they do in Galway, when waiters' necks are broken."

"Lord, sir! how little you Irish gents think of murder! Mr. O'Flaherty swore awfully below stairs, that it was a praiseworthy deed, and that there was more sin in shooting a snipe than an officer."

"I am pretty much of Mr. O'Flaherty's way of thinking. Will you have Captain Blake's bill made out, and direct his servant to put up his things? I'll call in an hour."

"Yes, sir—I shall, sir.—Very sorry to lose him, sir.—Nice gentleman if he would not smash doors. But, sir—Mr. Levi was here with his solicitor—examined the place, and swore that they would transport the captain."—"Yes, but they must first catch him."

"They said they would give five hundred pounds; for, if an example was not made, gentlemen in their line could not do business safely."

"And who is Mr. Levi?"—"An officer, sir."

"An officer!—what service?"—"Oh, sir, he's in the law—the sheriff-line; but only does West-end business. Would not touch anything in the City,—quite the gentleman, keeps his carriage,—person of high respectability."

I thought if Jack the Devil had Mr. Levi within the kingdom of Connaught, his respectability would not save him from a horse-pond, or prevent him returning home cropped close as a terrier.

As I walked leisurely to a coach-stand, I began to think that Jack's morning scrape was of a more serious character than I had at first imagined. Had the thing occurred in Ireland, the worst consequences would be an injury to his reputation as a shot; but here, there was a prejudice against pistols,—John Bull, in matters where life and limb were concerned, was sometimes stupid; and, if the scoundrels prosecuted, a jury might return a verdict that would enable Jack the Devil to visit Australasia, "passage free." But I was his good angel, and saved him from the consequences of his rashness.

I called a coach,—the steps were let down,—I entered it, and the waterman was closing the door, when two well-dressed men hopped in *sans cérémonie*, and a third mounted beside the driver, and the vehicle moved on. So rapidly the whole occurred, that it was some seconds before I could inquire what was the cause of this intrusion. In reply to my demand of explanation, one of them produced a paper.

"It is useless, captain, to make any noise; you did mischief enough this morning."

"What the deuce do you mean?"—"Nothing," said the fellow, drily, "but that you are a prisoner, and here's the writ."

"There is a mistake."—"None whatever. You are arrested at the suit of Blundell and Brown, for three hundred and twenty-seven pounds six shillings."

"You had better pull up, my friends: I owe these people nothing."—"Nobody never owed money," said the second fellow, with a grin. "It's only on 'what we calls suspicion of debt' we touched you."

"And will you persevere, although I again warn you of your error?"—"That we will," said both.

"And where do you intend to take me?"—"To Mr. Levi's lock-up—the best house of its line in London."

"Stop,—you are acting illegally."

They laughed.

"Well, mark the consequences."—"Ah, captain, how soft you are!"

"Very well,—you are cautioned—fellows."—"And your caution won't do, captain."

Finding remonstrance useless, I submitted in silence, and we were driven for a quarter of an hour, until we stopped in an obscure street, and at a house of most unpromising exterior.

I was conducted into a dirty coffee-room, provided with some half-dozen boxes, each curtained round, to prevent the occupants from being noticed by their companions in misery at the other tables. There was but one captive in the room beside myself, and the unhappy man was killing care over a stoup of gin and water.

He looked like a gentleman on the half-pay list, for his clothing was military and threadbare; but a braided frock and black stock proclaimed his former calling. He appeared sleepy or sulky; eyed me carelessly for a moment; laid down his head upon the table, and slept, or pretended to sleep.

My captivity was particularly ill-timed. False imprisonment was a bore; and to be cooped up in this den of wretchedness, intolerable, as my evening drive to St. Albans might be interrupted, and my reconciliation with Emily delayed. I knew that in a few hours I should be enabled to satisfy the scoundrels of their mistake, and prove to them that they had got the wrong man. There was nothing for it but patience. I submitted with as much philosophy as I could command—wrote to Aylmer—desired him to hasten to my relief—sealed the note, and was sending for

a messenger, when the door opened, and a female came in, and seated herself on the bench beside the sleeper.

The ease with which she approached him told that this was not her first visit to the domicile of Mr. Levi. She touched him lightly on the arm, and the slumberer aroused himself.

"What news, Lucy? Has he returned?"—"Not yet. I have been twice at his private residence. They tell me he is momentarily expected," replied the lady.

"If he is not here directly I'll blow him up," said the prisoner, with a deep imprecation.

"Has Evelyn and that other man been here?" she asked.—"They have; and I expect both within an hour," was the reply.

"And what have you decided on?"—"I will accept their terms, and send Sedley and his false promises to the devil," said the captive, with an oath.

"But then you lose the bond, and the thousand promised on his marriage," continued the female.

"Pshaw! Lucy! I would not give sixpence for either bond or promise,—one is as valid as the other. And as to his marriage, the return of that infernal fellow from abroad has knocked that hope up. Netty tells me that the young one hates him like poison, and is ready to bundle off with Blake at a moment's notice."

My ears tingled as the conversation proceeded. This must be the very man that the cynic was endeavouring to secure.

"Well, do nothing rashly," the female said in a subdued voice.—"Rashly, girl! Zounds! I have more patience than Job, or I would never have lain here four days for a paltry thirty-pound debt, when, if it were but known that I was under the screw, more detainers would be lodged in an hour, than I could ever rid myself of. Out I go this evening—no matter whether Sedley or Evelyn's friend pays the debt."

While their conversation was proceeding, I fancied I had heard the female's voice before, and in vain endeavoured to recollect the speaker. My memory failed, and I could not assist it by a view of her face, for her back was turned to me. But I had little time for thought: a man came in: the prisoner addressed him by name; the stranger was my rival—the man on earth whom I was most anxious to avoid. I drew the curtain more closely, and, unseen myself, could examine Sedley with attention.

He was a short and mean-looking personage; his air was vulgar, his figure stout and clumsy. No wonder Emily had rejected the suit of one whom nature had so lightly gifted. He looked round him cautiously, and perceiving me seated in the opposite box, whispered for a moment to the captive, who rose and followed him, leaving the fair visitor and me in undisturbed possession of the coffee-room.

I addressed her with some common-place remarks, which she as freely replied to. Strange, the voice was perfectly familiar,—I was dying for one peep at the face. Some minutes passed while I was devising means to gratify my curiosity; but the sudden return of my fellow-prisoner rendered it impossible.

To judge from his countenance, the interview between him and my rival had been stormy as brief. He entered in a towering passion, vowing vengeance against "that villain Sedley." From his rage, his communications to his female friend were hurried and disjointed; and it was only possible to collect, that his quondam associate had declared himself unable to release him from arrest for a day or two,—pleaded poverty,—entreated patience,—stated that he was obliged to leave town instantly for the country, and left the prisoner deeply incensed at what he termed, on Sedley's part, villainy and ingratitude. While he raved about the revenge he would exact, little information reached me; but in a short time the female pacified him, and he was tolerably composed, when two visitors were admitted, and in them I recognised, although one was closely muffled, my worthy friend the cynic, and his profligate agent, the fallen Evelyn. I drew myself closer into the corner, to avoid observation for a while; but as Sedley had done before, they took the imprisoned debtor out of the room, and madame and I were once more *vis-à-vis*.

While I was devising measures for obtaining a better view of the unknown, the lady saved me further trouble by leaving the box and advancing to the fire-place. She was young and well-looking, married,—I concluded, for I saw a ring glitter on her finger, and there were other matronly indications still less equivocal. A noise in the street caused her to turn her eyes to the window. The light fell strongly on her face,—Saints and angels! the well-remembered features of "the best of daughters" met my view!—my companion was the first lady of my love—the heiress of Captain Daly. From the obscurity of the place in which I was ensconced, my person was indistinctly seen, and Miss Lucinda had no suspicion that her favourite pupil was so contiguous.

"May I inquire, madam, if your husband is a military man?"—"He has been in the army, sir."

"I fancy, madam, I have had the pleasure of seeing him before. Pray, was he ever in the Galway militia?"—"No, sir; his was an English regiment. But I know the Galway well."

"Then possibly you can give me some information as to former friends?"

"Did you know that regiment, sir?"—"A little, ma'am. I was with them in garrison at Limerick."

I inquired for three or four; and the whole corps, with the exception of myself, were dead or married.

"And is Captain O'Doherty alive?"—"Oh, yes. He ran away with the paymaster's wife from Strabane, and they are on the Continent."

"What has become of Captain Macdonaugh?"—"He was brought to a court-martial for keeping low company,—dismissed, and died of drunkenness."

"There was a cross and ill-tongued fellow in the corps, called Aylmer. Is he living?"—"Yes, sir; and has recovered a considerable portion of the property he had lost."

"One question more;—I fear I tire you, madam. I remember that for a short time there was a young hemp in the Galway, called Blake;—what has become of him?"

I watched her narrowly, and her cheeks coloured.

"I hardly recollect him, sir. He was, I have heard, a handsome lad: he left us for the line, and is now a captain."

"Indeed! He has been luckier than I antici-

pated or he deserved. Did he not promise to be a sad *roué*, madam?"—"I don't know. He was so young when he volunteered, and having been abroad since——"

"Oh, you are accounting for his being still unhanged?"—"Unhanged, sir!"

"Yes, madam. You were too fortunate in escaping his acquaintance—he would have taught you bad habits."—"Bad habits, sir!"

"Oh yes, madam. He kept late hours, was fond of cards, and the worst piquet-player that ever lost a vole."

I saw by the lady's face that every moment added to her confusion.

"There was a family called Daly in that corps,—what has become of the young one?"—"She is married."

"Indeed! I hope comfortably?"

There was no answer, but I heard a deep and half-suppressed sigh. The lady's agitation increased as she faintly asked me, "if I knew Miss Daly?" and I answered in the affirmative.

"Where, sir?"—"At Kilcommon, ma'am."

"Kilcommon!" And she reddened to the eyes.—"Yes, madam. Do you remember those quarters?"

Her confusion increased, and in a broken voice she muttered—

"Nothing, sir,—nothing more—than that the town was ugly—the barrack old——"

"The wood-work rotten — and the panels loose."

She started.—"Good God! sir, who are you?"—"Am I then forgotten, Lucy?—*I*, your quondam pupil?"

Never did surprise exceed hers. She sat down beside me, and in a few words I learned her history since we last parted.

It was a short and melancholy story. Lucy had been harshly treated by her parents, and taunted with indiscretion, which their culpable neglect alone had caused; and to escape domestic misery, she married a lieutenant of a London regiment. When the militia was disembodied, they were thrown almost destitute upon the world. Her husband's habits were idle and dissipated, and in his distress he flew for relief to low gaming-houses,—lived by "ways and means," and was fast hurrying to destruction. He had, she said, wealthy relatives in America, willing to assist him, if he could but get there. But imprisonment would ruin this last hope,—and one of loose principles and conduct like him would soon be utterly demoralised in a gaol.

I had only time to express my sympathy—give her present relief, and an assurance of future assistance, when Williams and his visitors returned. He was a prisoner no longer,—a treaty with the cynic effected his liberation—the debt was discharged, and he came to remove his wife.

"We understand each other perfectly," said Aylmer.—"We do," was the reply; "and Captain Blake may depend on my fidelity."

"So much the better for all concerned,—Farewell! we meet, you know where, to-morrow. I must hurry off to dine with a friend."

The cynic moved a pace or two.

"Not so fast," I said in a low voice; "your friend is present."

Aylmer startled, came closer, and looked at me to ascertain my identity.

"In the name of Beelzebub! what brought you here?"—"A hackney-coach and three officers."

"For what?"—"Nothing but suspicion of debt."

"Will you be serious, or shall I go mad?"

"Sit down," I replied, "and permit that lady and these gentlemen to retire."

Lucy, Williams, and his associate disappeared; and I briefly explained to the cynic the causes of my captivity.

"Is not all this amazingly provoking?" I concluded.—"Why, yes," said Aylmer; "and yet this two hours' captivity of yours will save that marplot, with the evil cognomen, from certain transportation."

"And was there any chance of that?"—"The fairest imaginable," replied Aylmer. "John Bull does not approve of random practice through panelled doors; and even a bailiff is considered within the pale of legal protection. Ring the bell: the sooner matters are arranged, the sooner we shall get our dinner."

For half an hour Aylmer and the West-end catchpole held a cabinet divan, and Mr. Levi was speedily convinced that I was not the real Simon Pure. A compromise was eventually concluded: I gave a cheque upon my banker for my cousin's debt to Blundell and Brown, and my false imprisonment was allowed to pair off against Jack's infraction of a certain statute, intituled "Lord Ellenborough's Act."

It was five o'clock before these momentous concerns were arranged. We left the lock-up for a tavern—dined—drank a liberal allowance of wine—favoured each other with full details of the "parlous adventures" of the day, and separated at seven o'clock,—I for

"The Castle in Saint Albans,"

and Aylmer, to mature his plans for my aggrandisement and the discomfiture of my rival.

When I thought of it, this was but a melancholy picture of human occupation: yet it was the every-day history of a life,—rising on the ruin of another, if ambitious; and when unaspiring, falling in turn a victim!

CHAPTER IX.

RECONCILIATION.—DETECTION.—SYMPTOMS OF FORGIVENESS.

"We met in secret,—doubly sweet,
Some say, they find it so to meet."
Mazeppa.

"You would have married her most shamefully,
Where there was no proportion held in love.
The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,
Are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed:
And this deceit loses the name of craft,
Of disobedience, or unduteous title,
Since therein she doth evitate and shun
A thousand irreligious, cursed hours,
Which forced marriage would have brought upon her."
Merry Wives of Windsor.

IF there be in mortal happiness a moment of sublimated bliss, it is that when the first offending of love is owned and pardoned. I thought the drive to St. Albans interminable, and though stimulated by the promise of a double fee the

postillions drove furiously, the miles seemed lengthening, until the smoking horses stopped at the Verulam Arms, and I found myself under the same roof with Emily. From the waiter, who conducted me to a sitting-room, I learned that the next apartment was tenanted by an elderly gentleman and a lady; and farther, that one of her attendants had twice inquired whether "Captain Philips had yet arrived;" this being my *nom de guerre*. I requested him to announce discreetly to the *demoiselle* of the toilet, that the object of her researches was in waiting.

It was past ten, and a later hour for Mr. Harrison to be out of bed than customary. Every noise in the lobby—every door that opened, made my pulse quicken. At last a decided bustle in the hall announced a movement. I listened impatiently, and heard the well-known voice of my grandfather pronounce, "Good-night, love!"

The waiter was an adept—he managed to intimate my presence without delay, and in a few minutes my mother's *confidante* was introduced, and we were left together.

"Phœbe—dear, dear Phœbe, have you made my peace?—Is Emily here?—does she forgive?—will she see me?"

"Stop, stop; how can you imagine that I could answer half these questions? In short, your peace is made,—your mistress in the drawing-room,—and, worse than all, the foolish girl more anxious to confirm your pardon, than I to recommend it."

"Phœbe, how can I thank you?"

"Well—what new iniquity have you perpetrated? We read your duel in *The Post:* and that, were anything wanting, settled you no doubt with Mr. Harrison."—"No, no, Phœbe; I have in this, as in other matters, gained laurels which another won. I was not the combatant,—merely a looker-on. But my sweet Emily! where is she? Bring me to her."

"Lord! how impatient the man is! Would it not have been civil on your part to have inquired where my journey ended; and how I, a lone and helpless woman, escaped the perils of the road? 'Faith! I am surely possessed, to leave my home and husband, and follow the fortunes of a mad boy and love-sick girl. Here have I been nearly overturned in the mail, besides losing my sleep travelling by night, and probably my character, hunting after a wild Irishman through half the hotels in London."

"Indeed, Phœbe, I am heavily your debtor, and have at this moment nothing to offer which you would accept, save the old payment—thanks and kisses."

"Keep both, gallant sir. The first I don't require—the second may be useful in the next room. Follow me there in five minutes,—and Heaven send the old man does not make one of the party! When travelling, he is always restless; and his man Robert roams through every inn we stop at, as if he was an unquiet spirit condemned to haunt the house. Remember the room,—the door is the first on the right hand. If it be possible to blunder, you'll do it." She laughed, and left me.

I rang the bell, and put back supper for an hour,—ascertained from the waiter that Mr. Harrison had retired to his chamber—and, when he had disappeared, I stole on tiptoe to the drawing-room, and next moment Emily was in my arms.

I wonder what the subjects are that lovers talk of in their endless *tête-à-têtes*. My pardon had been duly sealed—my disclaimer of Jack's iniquities implicitly credited—Emily listened and believed my reiterated vows of constancy—our faith was plighted anew, and the rose-diamond sparkled on the finger of my artless and beautiful mistress. More than once, Phœbe came in to tell us that the hour had elapsed—but what were hours to us! Coaches arrived and departed: and while I played with my love's luxuriant ringlets, and kissed a forehead smooth and white as the artist's marble, the door opened, and remained for a few moments ajar. It closed; I cursed the stupid intruder—some passenger, doubtless, who had mistaken his chamber. No matter—Emily and I were far too happy to think of him for a second. Once more Phœbe came to warn us of the lapse of time. The waiter, as discreet a pantler as ever chipped bread, assured her that my supper was more than ready, and the cook inexorable touching farther delay. Supper,—pshaw! supper was a sublunary concern, and we were in the seventh heaven. I execrated the cook,—Emily laughed,—Phœbe scolded,—and again we were left alone.

"Emily," I said, as my arm encircled her, lives there a man whose influence could sever our bond of love?"—She shook her pretty head. "None, Blake. I never knew what love was till we met."

"And do you love me, Emily?"—"Love you! What is love? Is it to think of you—dream of you—sleep while I prayed for your happiness, and wake with your name upon my lips. If this is love, I love you."

"But your guardian, Emily—your adopted father——"

"Never did daughter doat upon a father more."

"I know it, Emily. Would you risk his anger, or renounce me if he commanded you?"

"It would break my heart to leave him——"

"Go on, Emily."

"Yet were the sacrifice to be made, I would give up all for——"

"Me, Emily?"

She did not speak, but hid her burning cheeks upon my bosom. I pressed her to my heart.

"Then shall no human power sunder us!" I exclaimed. "You are all to me; and though a world were at stake, 'I would not lose thee for a world!'"

My eyes were turned upon my gentle mistress, and at that moment the door opened so silently, that I did not hear the lock yielding. A slight noise made me look round: there stood my grandfather, and behind him the villain Sedley!

Emily uttered a faint scream; but I sprang forward, and though the old man's lip trembled with passion, and his eye lightened with rage, I felt so perfectly satisfied that the crisis of my fate had arrived and was not to be averted, that I made no effort to deprecate his anger. He moved slowly towards the sofa, while Sedley shut the door. Mechanically I advanced to Mr. Harrison, and offered my support—but he spurned my assistance.

"Off, sir!" he said harshly, "I touch no hand red with another's blood. The murderer's shall never be held in mine!"—"I am no murderer," I replied.

"Oh, I cry your pardon, sir;—you only

maimed your victim."—"You are wrong, sir. I have maimed nobody."

"What!" said the old gentleman, "do you brazen the thing out? Are you not a duellist—an honourable cut-throat? and did you not yesterday wound some other fool?"—"No; it was done by another."

"By another!" And he turned a searching glance at Sedley.

"The papers stated that Captain Blake had been engaged in an affair of honour, and that his antagonist was wounded," said the lawyer, coolly.

"A Captain Blake did wound a gentleman, but I am not the man; and that yon scoundrel could have told you if he pleased." And I directed a fiery look at my rival, who seemed not even to have noticed it.

The old man was fearfully agitated. "Ring," he said,—"Order me a glass of water."

Although his voice was addressed to me, Sedley stepped forward officiously. I, with a threatening gesture, waved him back.

"Stop, sir!" I said haughtily; "Although my grandsire has refused my hand, he does not think it will contaminate the bell-rope."

"Peace, boy, peace! no brawling here. This scene was unexpected; but it is as well it comes to-night as to-morrow."

The waiter brought in the water, and left the room immediately.

"Emily," he said in a faltering voice, "what means this? Is it an accidental meeting? or have you, whom I imagined artless as a child—pure as the being of a better world, deceived my confidence, and destroyed my hopes? Speak—tell me the worst."

I marked her agitation,—she could not answer him. She was now mine, and I advanced boldly and took her hand.

"Shall I reply for you, Emily?"

Her look assented,—the old man gazed with attention,—Sedley looked askance; but his look spoke daggers.

"It is *not* by accident I am here, sir: I have been traduced, slandered, and came hither to assure this beloved one of my innocence, and disabuse you, if you will permit me."

"*Beloved* you call her!—I mark the term. Have you obeyed me, and furthered the suit of this gentleman? or, contrary to my commands, dared to make advances to my ward?"—"*All this have I dared;* and, threatened with your eternal displeasure, have wooed and won this lady. But I have marred the designs of yon mean villain, and saved you the sin of murdering her future happiness."

"Ay, ay," muttered the old man, "the leaven is the same,—reckless and fiery as his father! Boy, know you what you peril?"—"Well; your favour and your estates. That scoundrel in your rear will possibly maintain the one, and succeed to the other."

"But why abuse him?" said the old man, "before me his patron, and that lady——"

"Stop, sir! That lady is my affianced wife."—"Indeed!" And Mr. Harrison bent his eyes upon my mistress.

"She is," I answered; "and we abide your anger."

"Emily—once loved girl—is this so? Have you listened to a betrayer?"—"She has not," I replied boldly. "I have saved her from a union with a villain, and you from the sin of effecting it."

"This, sir, is not to be borne," said my rival, as he came forward. "If I have been protected by you,—if you have considered sacred your promise to the dead—am I to be maligned, and you to be bearded by this intemperate young man? My profession, my habits, are different from Captain Blake's: I hold duelling to be a crime, gaming——"

I fixed my eye upon the scoundrel steadily. "What brought you to Levi's house to-day?"

Sedley turned pale, and the old man noticed it.

"There is more here than meets the eye,—it must be sifted. Captain Blake—" (and the formality of his address almost choked him,)—"what reason have you to charge my ward with crimes that, if proven, would cost him my favour irrecoverably?"—"I will prove him a scoundrel and a knave, or submit to any penalty, but the loss of you, my sweet Emily." And I took her hand.

"You hear this, Sedley?" And his cold and withering look fell on the conscience-stricken countenance of the *roué*.—"I do," he muttered in confusion; "and if Captain Blake dare——"

"What?"

"Support his allegations——"

"Ay, and prove them."

Mr. Harrison looked at us attentively.—"There's calmness in his manner," he half exclaimed, as he eyed me carefully. "And have you not played deep,—patronised bruisers,—lived with an opera-girl—and shot at some fellow in the Guards?"—"No, sir. All and every portion of these charges is unfounded."

The old man bent a wrathful brow, as he said to my discomfited rival,—"Did you not tell me all this was true?"—"I did. The papers——"

"Pshaw! why blame the papers?" said the old man, testily; "did I not warn you of their inaccuracy, and send you specially to town to institute inquiries, and ascertain how far these statements could be supported. You returned,—told me all was too true, and that the profligacy of my grandson was proverbial."

Sedley looked confounded, and made no reply. "And now, John,"—and he turned to me—"what charges do you bring against this gentleman?"—"He is a ruined gambler,—the associate of blacklegs; and farther, I accuse him of robbing his benefactor—yourself, and concealing his embezzlements by trickery and fraud. Have you ever employed him in any stock transactions?"

The old man started,—and Sedley grew paler still, when he asked him, "if he had made the transfers?"—"It was too late, sir;—an accident delayed the coach, and the offices were closed before I reached town."

"And yet you left me at Daventry before nine!"

Sedley muttered something of a break-down; but guilt was apparent, and his look was that of a convicted criminal. The old man continued:—

"Go, sir. Return to town; we sleep not under the same roof until your innocence is established." And he desired me to ring the bell and order a postchaise. "At four to-morrow meet me in London at my solicitor's, and see that you bring the stock-receipts, and ample testimony to refute these damning allegations against your

character." Then turning to me, he said, "Youth will be occasionally wayward and irregular, and time and experience may redeem the errors of the head, if the heart be sound; but where there is falsehood and hypocrisy, that case is hopeless."

The carriage-wheels were heard; — Sedley bowed to Miss Clifden,—advanced to take the old man's hand, which he scornfully refused,—passed me with a scowl of deadly hatred, and whispered in a voice too low for any but myself to hear, "Look to yourself, Blake!"

A smile of bitter contempt was the only answer his threat elicited; and in a few minutes we heard the carriage start for London.

"You must be tired, sir? This scene was much too trying for an invalid."—"I am a little nervous; but happy that this *éclaircissement* has taken place. Sedley, I fear, is a lost man. His guilt is clear; and, from some circumstances, I am convinced that in the stock which I entrusted him to transfer, there will be found a serious defalcation. It is but six thousand pounds in all: the money is a poor consideration to the detected worthlessness of the son of him I loved so warmly.—Heighho! And you assure me that all these wild and graceless pranks have been perpetrated by that madcap cousin of Satanic name?"

"Indeed, sir, I am guiltless of deceit or concealment, save in one act of disobedience. And before another day passes, you will freely pardon it, and thank me for being so undutiful, as to become a principal in Love's diplomacy, instead of the *chargé-d'affaires* you intended I should be."

"Well, I believe it is likely to turn out so. But you, traitress!"—and he turned to Emily, on whose sweet face tears and smiles were mingled,—"what shall I say to *you?* You to conspire with that *roué* to desert me! Was I in my last hours to lose my child—my comfort—my——"

"Oh, no, no! I will never, never leave you!" And she flung her arms around his neck, and wept upon the old man's bosom.

Mr. Harrison was deeply affected. "Kiss me, my own darling,—and now to bed. It is late, and I wish to speak a few words to John." And he blessed her fervently.

"Good-night, Blake," she said, as with cast-down looks she presented her white hand to me.

"I am a little near-sighted, love," said the old man, archly.

The hint was not lost upon me, and poor Emily left the room covered with blushes.

"Have you supped, John?"—"No, sir."

"Order it here, and I will sit with you."

I did so,—made a hurried meal,—assisted my grandfather upstairs, — talked politics while Robert undressed him,—bade him good night, and sought my pillow to sleep and dream of Emily.

CHAPTER X.

THE RED LION.—LOVERS' QUARRELS, AND THE USUAL RESULT.

"My light of life! ah, tell me why,
That pouting lip and alter'd eye?"

BYRON.

"*Julia.*—I have been content to bear from you, what pride and delicacy would have forbad me from another. I will not upbraid you, by repeating how you have trifled with my sincerity.

Falkland.—I confess it all! yet hear——"

The Rivals.

EARLY next morning I visited the old gentleman in his chamber, and found that, notwithstanding the agitation he suffered the preceding night, he had rested well. I told him I was obliged to leave for town directly after breakfast,—promised to dine with him in Clarges-street, and took charge of a packet for his solicitor, which I undertook to deliver before twelve o'clock. I left him; and on descending to the parlour, found my sweet Emily already there.

Never was happiness more visible upon a human countenance than that which brightened hers; joy laughed in her sparkling eyes, and dimpled her rosy cheek. Phœbe remarked the alteration that restored tranquillity and sanctioned love had wrought; and I too thought Emily more beautiful than ever.

"Plague on that crack-brained cousin with the demoniac byname!" said the landlady of the Cross Keys; "what mischief his iniquities have caused us all! I lost my rest—Miss Emily her roses—the old gentleman his temper—Sedley a large behest; — the only gainer is yourself, captain."

"Certainly my friend Jack contrived to make a glorious *brouillerie* among us. But it is over,—we have escaped, and the only sufferer is that scoundrel Sedley."

"I am glad," said Phœbe, "he is finally discarded. I hated him for his ugliness,—yet that was wrong; but there is a coldness about that fellow which makes a villain doubly dangerous. Take care of him," she said, turning to me; "he will not lose a rich legacy by you without exacting deep revenge if he can obtain it."

I smiled. "Phœbe, he will never trouble me. Pshaw!—he is below contempt."—"You are too secure," she replied. "Mean scoundrels are more formidable than bold and open enemies."

"Well, well, time flies. Emily, I am obliged to start for town immediately: what can I do for you till we meet at dinner?"—"Start for town! Will you not accompany us? And can two or three hours be of such moment?"

"Why yes—when a lady is concerned a man cannot be too particular; and I have an appointment to keep."

"With whom?"—"The prettiest girl in Portland-place."

"And for what purpose?"—"Only to drive her to Streatham."

"Now, on my life!" said Phœbe, angrily, "this is intolerable. Who is the lady?"—"Had you stopped in Berners-street fifteen minutes, as I wanted you to do, you would have seen her."

"Ha! was she the person you expected, and for whom I was at first mistaken?"—"The same:"—Emily's cheeks flushed;—"and a more

punctual gentlewoman never indited a *billet-doux* on satin paper."

"Is she handsome?—is she agreeable?"—"Pleasing in her manners—exceedingly pretty—and——"

"And what?" said mistress and attendant in duetto.

"I never met a woman more decidedly in love!"

Phœbe blazed up, and Emily looked broken-hearted.

"With whom?"—"With Jack the Devil!" and I caught the sweet girl to my heart, and kissed away the tear that was stealing down her cheek. When I had told the story of my kinsman's conquest, Phœbe laughed at her young mistress.

"You are a provoking wretch!" she said,—"torturing Miss Emily so, and making me appear unamiable, by teasing me into something like bad temper. But I'll plague you for this!"

The horn sounded,—up came the Tally-Ho,—the waiter threw my carpet bag to the guard,—I snatched a kiss from Emily—boxed Phœbe's ears—jumped up behind the coachman—turned the corner, and Emily and the Verulam Arms disappeared.

I reached London in good time—left the coach—drove to Berners-street—despatched my grandfather's packet to the solicitor, and sent for Jack's phaeton to drive Miss Moreland to Streatham, to receive the fealty of my repentant kinsman. It wanted but a quarter of the appointed hour, and I waited for the carriage impatiently, when the waiter showed up Colonel O'Donnel.

We shook hands.

"Ah! glad to see you. How have you been since? Left our friend in tolerable spirits—very anxious for your return. Drove round by Dulwich,—Neville convalescent—wound healing fast,—speaks handsomely of your cousin. Just from an interview with the baron,—delivered a message, which he declined—gave him two hours, of which fifty-seven minutes ten seconds are unexpired, to return securities, or fight your kinsman. If he demur, I shall proclaim his cowardice, and flog him in the Park—and, from certain and indubitable proofs in my possession, I shall then submit the matter to a court of honour, and show that Captain Blake was cheated by a blackleg. Ah! I see your phaeton—when will you be home?"—"At half-past three. Jack will be with me, for I have settled that matter with the Philistines."

"Egad! happy to find it has been accommodated."

"I want you here particularly, colonel; I need a friend."—"Don't name it—glad to hear it—quite ready,—I'll do the thing with pleasure—or, if you prefer your cousin, I'll act *en second*, and counsel and assist."

"I think, my dear colonel, I shall not exactly need a fighting friend; but it is a comfort to know where one can find him if required."

"Ah! that it is;" and the little man sighed heavily. "Letters to-day from Ireland,—very distressing indeed. Poor Bob Grady,—good a fellow as ever touched a feather spring,—shot dead, and by a novice—a man that never burnt powder before!"

"Very dreadful!" I said, fully convinced notwithstanding that the gentleman who pinked Bob "had done the State some service."

"Dreadful indeed!—He was murdered, sir! Stuck in the corner of a stack-yard—sun in his eyes—and the fool, his second, unable to load a pistol. Why, sir, though Bob executed beautifully, the ball, for want of powder, dropped within three paces of his own foot. Poor fellow! in what splendid style he shot Counsellor O'Flinn! An election quarrel—mob unfriendly—sheriff in the next field—priest cursing in one corner—magistrate roaring out the riot act in another—and, in all the *bruit*, Bob popped his bullet through the aorta, and the lawyer never kicked. Poor dear Bob!"

I left the little colonel in the middle of his lament for Mr. Grady, and drove to Albemarle-street, where, at Madame Fancourt's temple of fashion, I found Jack's inamorata ready to accompany me. I took her up—stopped at Craven-street—apprised the cynic that he would be required at four, and turned the horses' heads towards Streatham.

"Well, Captain Blake," said my fair companion, as we drove along the Waterloo Road, "if anything were wanting to establish my feminine propriety in your estimation after my visit to Berners-street, would it not be this prudent expedition to a country inn?"

"Why, 'faith, Miss Moreland, in the days of our grandmothers, people might have been found prudish enough to discountenance these unceremonious interviews: Sir Charles Grandison would have shaken his head, and Miss Clarissa Harlowe required unlacing and volatile salts."

"And," she continued with a sigh, "if the man were worth all this risk and trouble! Now, do think what a blunderer he is! The packet he sent me by you contained a lock of hair black enough to belong to a daughter of Judah; and the miniature was not a portrait of my fair self, but a faithful likeness of that plain-featured gentlewoman, the army clothier's daughter, whom, as I already told you, it pleased to fall in love with your feather-headed cousin."

I laughed—it was so like what Jack the Devil would do.

"What a bungler he must be!" I said; "how could he make such a palpable mistake?"—"Easily," replied the lady: "the fellow has, no doubt, a drawer full of *billets-doux*, and pictures enough to supply an exhibition: my name commencing with the same letter—the packets lay contiguous—and he mistook them in his hurry——"

"Or rather his grief;—tears and twilight obscured his vision."

"No, no," she said smilingly, "Jack is none of your lachrymose lovers; and in whatever school he acquired his philosophy, certainly it was not the weeping one. Heigh-ho! sometimes I think that mine is a desperate venture, and wonder I can

> 'Prize the flame
> Which seems, as marshy vapours move,
> To flit along from dame to dame—
> As ignis-fatuus gleam of love.'

Well, it is too late I fear, to redeem my folly; and there is no remedy but——"

"Matrimony—I know that is the word you want;—pray, when do you commence the course?"

She laughed.—"That requires sage and deliberate consideration."

"Make me your consulting lawyer."

"Well, sir—but no hurry, if you please."—"Certainly not—none in the world.—If you and Jack are clear of the stones by twelve to-morrow, it will do."

"To-morrow !—Lord ! what does the man mean? Why a month would not make preparations for the journey."—"Which preparations are already made. I'll wager twenty kisses your trunks are packed; and your own maid shall prove it."

"Why, thou most impudent of Irishmen ! do you suppose that I would run away with a man that never asked me?"—"But I did—and you consented."

"I disclaim the consent."—"And I'll affirm it in any court of Cupid. Will you deny that you ordered a close bonnet at Fancourt's to hide your pretty face from curious innkeepers on the great North-road?"

"I won't run away this fortnight."—"You will before half the time. I wish I could go with you. I shall be obliged to travel through the regular road of Doctor's Commons; or, if the old man takes it into his head, like Lydia Languish, 'be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Blake and Emily Clifden.'"

We drove to the Red Lion, where Jack had bivouacked during his tribulation, and were shown to apartments which were unoccupied, as the gallant captain was walking in the garden. Jack's "great chamber," like the best parlour of a country inn, was clean, comfortable, crowded with furniture, and the general depository for all the valuable portion of the household goods. The plate and glass were displayed in a book-case, and the china drawn up in treble files upon an old-fashioned bureau: needle-work, race-horses, sea-fights, and stuffed birds, ornamented the walls and chimney-piece. The table, however, was the greatest curiosity; it showed that Jack had been preparing for some grand movement, as it was covered with sheets and shreds of paper, on which sundry epistles had been commenced. I desired the maid to inform the gentleman "that his cousin had arrived," but not to mention that a lady was his companion.

"How comfortable master Jack has managed that his place of banishment should be !"

The lady pouted.

"Had we driven round the metropolis for a week, we could not have selected a pleasanter retirement."—"I suppose not: but why did he stop here? Is the landlady very handsome, and the attendant *piquante* and pretty?"

"You are right,—excellent specimens of alehouse beauty. But let us see how my kinsman has been employed. Ha !

'Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.'

Let us examine these fragments, and they will exhibit a pretty accurate picture of what is passing in the writer's thoughts."

"Would this be fair?" said Miss Moreland.—"Oh, perfectly. Listen, and I'll name you Jack's correspondents before I reach the third line.

"'*An unfortunate affair of honour, which I will explain at Castle Blake*—' —Ah ! that is for my uncle Manus—put it away. '*Sir—if a scoundrel abuses the confidence of a gentleman, to plunder him at play*—' —That's the baron, and no mistake.—'*When this reaches you, one who with all his faults loved devotedly, will be in another land*—' —(Miss Moreland sighed heavily :)—'*Yes, Sophia, I leave England, wretched and heart-broken !*'—Can you possibly guess who Jack the Devil means?"

"Do go on, you provoking man !"

"Ay—'*wretched and heart-broken*'—I think we stopped there—'*and under Bolivar and a burning sun*—'"

"God forbid !" ejaculated the Director's daughter.—"Ay, God forbid !—Jack could never bear heat—he's too intemperate."

"You abominable man !—Go on."

"Well, we left him under a burning sun'—Ay, here he goes—'*find the only boon I wish—a soldier's grave.*' Now I really think Jack the Devil is light in his demands upon the Liberator. '*When I am gone*'"—she sobbed, and I laughed—

"You cruel wretch !" she muttered, as she snatched the paper, and read with triumphant emphasis a passage, in which the writer declared that his constancy was eternal, and his mental tranquillity ruined for ever—'*the hand I plighted thee shall never be another's—the lip which thine has pressed*——'"

"Stop—for Heaven's sake ! that 'hand and lip' passage is too bad; there is no standing Jack's heroics."—"Why, thou man of snow ! is it because you cannot feel an enduring passion that you laugh at love in others?" said the lady.

"Come, my fair friend, step in here, I must gradually break the glad tidings of your visit, or sudden joy might be fatal to one whose nerves are so exquisitely sensitive as that constant swain, my cousin."—"Ah, poor fellow ! I am dying to tell him he is pardoned."

"You shall see him in a moment. His window looks upon the garden; doubtless there he walks, Romeo-like, with folded arms and downcast eyes,

'With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs.'"

We peeped over the sun-blind: beneath us was the neat and well-kept flower knot of the Lion, separated from the adjoining paddock by a holly fence; and there was Jack the Devil certainly, but, "Oh sin, oh sorrow !" not as we had anticipated, in deep despondency or sombre meditation, but in his flowered dressing-gown, lounging across the hedge, and flirting with the parson's maid, who it appeared was the possessor of the adjacent premises. Sophia and I looked at each other;—I laughed outright, and she pouted and stamped passionately on the carpet.

"Poor fellow ! I think even at this distance I can detect a shade of sadness on his countenance. Well, I did wrong him; he has the 'heart-broken' look he talked of in his letter, and other symptoms of 'enduring love.'"

"I never, *never* will forgive him !" replied the Director's daughter.—"Oh yes, you will. It's all a mistake; Jack has been remarkably fond of children from his cradle, and hence his innocent partiality for nursemaids."

"See, how provokingly familiar the fellow is !"—"Not at all,—I tell you it's the child he's fondling."

"I tell you it is the nurse,—did I not see him tap the gipsy's cheek !"—"Well, he tapped the

wrong one. But look, our pretty barmaid delivers my message—Here he comes."

"Ay, and coquetting with her too, as I am a true woman!"—"Nonsense! he's only ordering dinner."

"I won't bear this, positively! He may go to Kamschatka if he please, and it shall not cost me a tear."—"Right; let him be off to Brazils. For my own part, I wish he was safe in South America."

"You are laughing at me, you heartless man! but you shall see how coolly I shall discard him."—"Ay, by all means keep your temper, and will you unpack the trunks, and countermand the bonnet? But I hear Jack's foot:" and I entered the sitting-room as he came in from the lobby.

"Ah, John, I am so glad you are come! I have been looking for you impatiently. Have you any news—any letter—any message?"—"Why, nothing very particular. Neville is out of danger, and James Daly returned for Galway."

"Did you see Miss Moreland?"—"Yes, and a very pretty girl she is."

"Have you brought me an answer?"—"I have only a verbal one;—she wonders what control she could have over Miss Mardyn; and says, so far as she is concerned, that you may wear her picture to eternity."

"What can she mean? Good heavens! I must have sent the wrong packet in my hurry."—"Well, by the next messenger send the right one. But you told me that you were going to Ireland; now there you hint something 'about Bolivar and a burning sun.'"

"Why, surely you did not read my letters?"—"And what would you have me do while you were philandering over the fence, with that smart abigail in the pink ribands?"

"Indeed, John, you wrong me. I am in no humour for flirtation: the girl is young and pretty, and I was giving her some good advice."

"But why impress it as you did?—there was no occasion to paw her across the hedge: I thought, from what you say there about 'a broken heart and South America,' that you would have been packing your traps, and not moralising with nursery-maids."

"Now, John, I am in no humour for jesting. It's devilish unkind on your part;—were you half as wretched as I, on my soul! I would not trifle with your misery."

Jack's back was to the chamber-door, and there stood Sophia shaking her head at me, and ready to forgive him.

"Well, I won't mention the maid;—go on, Jack."

"Did Sophia send me no message?"—"Nothing that I can particularly remember. Oh yes! she said something civil about 'future success and a short passage.'"

"And did she not write?"—"Not a line;—she would, I fancy, had she not been going out to drive; and as one of the horses had caught cold——"

"By Heaven! all women are the same—I'll never trust another;" and Jack strode through the room so heavily, that the china rattled on the bureau. "She cast me off; *she*—the only woman I ever loved, the only one I could ever have been happy with. John," he said, as he turned suddenly to me, "it's all ended—I am superlatively wretched—I'll shoot that blackguard baron in the morning, and myself afterwards."

"No, don't. It's a bore to lie in a public-house, for all the coal-porters in the parish to examine you, with a dozen tradesmen and the neighbouring apothecaries tumbling you back and forward, to satisfy themselves how you came by your end."

"All I could bear;—villainy from man—what matters it? one could cut a scoundrel's throat. But falsehood, and from Sophia! Oh, God! that she whom I loved so fondly could desert me without a pang!"

Jack was desperately overcome, and leaned his head within his hands upon the table. Sophia was standing in the door-way already in tears, and dying to fly into his arms;—she stole forward on tiptoe, playfully patted his cheek,—he looked up, and caught her to his heart. I of course levanted to order the horses round, and in the interim examine the *locale* of the Red Lion.

When I returned, Jack arraigned me of misprision. "Ah John! I thought you would not league against me with Sophia, read my letters, and——"

"Disturb your homily to the nurse-maid."

"I forgive you," said Jack the Devil; "the dear girl consents to become mine, and to-morrow night we start for Gretna."

"Indeed? Miss Moreland, is this true?"—"Yes—I said something unguardedly."

I kissed my pretty cousin. Her lover stared.

"Don't be jealous, man! She owed me twenty, Jack, and you may take the other nineteen."

We drove into town—left Sophia in Albemarle-street,—I was set down at "mine own inn," and we separated, he to look after his own affairs, and I to complete my destinies with the old man, and win the "lady of my love."

CHAPTER XI.

THE INVESTIGATION.—DINNER IN CLARGES-STREET.

"Well, 'fore George! you shan't say I do things by halves. Son-in-law, thou looks like a hearty rogue, so we'll have a night on't. 'Ecod! I don't know how I came to be in so good a humour."

SHERIDAN.

TRUE to his appointment, Colonel O'Donnel was punctual to a minute; and, with my friend Jack, we proceeded from Berners-street to Lincoln's-inn-Fields to meet Mr. Harrison, and witness the establishment of Sedley's innocence or guilt. We were set down at the solicitor's, and conducted to the drawing-room, where we found my grandfather seated in an easy chair, to determine of his heirs presumptive which was the real Simon Pure. I presented my friends in due form, and he received them graciously; although I fancied he cast a suspicious side-look at Jack, to ascertain whether he was quite safe under the same roof with one whose exploits and cognomen, in his estimation, were equally diabolic. In a few minutes the cynic made his appearance: he too was introduced to the old gentleman; and, as he mentioned that Evelyn and Williams were below, we only paused for the culprit's arrival, to proceed with this our "delicate investigation."

A general conversation, in which my grandfather freely joined, ensued; and, considering

his characteristic shyness with strangers, he was not only agreeable, but unusually communicative. The clock struck four; a coach stopped,—a loud knock was heard,—somebody came upstairs,—of course it was the accused. Every eye turned to the door—it opened, and not Sedley, but the solicitor, added himself to the cabinet council then and there assembled.

"Have you," said Mr. Harrison, as he addressed himself to me, "brought evidence to substantiate the grave charges you preferred last night against the person to whom I have been guardian?"—"I have, sir," I replied. "My friend Aylmer will best explain what the delinquencies are which have been imputed to Mr. Sedley. I should rather, however, if it meets your approval, postpone the inquiry until the accused is present, and afford him a fair opportunity to exculpate himself if he can."

"Fairly spoken," said the old man.

"If you wait for Mr. Sedley's attendance here," said the solicitor, "I fear, gentlemen, you will wait in vain. I have been to his reputed residence, and sought him besides in every place where it was likely to make him out, and my search was idle. He is nowhere to be found; I could learn no tidings of him but indifferent ones. His chambers are locked up—his lodgings stripped and deserted—and nothing is left behind, save a few useless articles of old furniture, which the landlord has seized for rent."

"Have you ascertained," said my grandfather, "how the stock transactions stand?"—"I have, sir: every sixpence has from time to time been sold out, and the last five hundred transferred and disposed of yesterday."

"These are indeed," said the old man, "heavy tidings; and to the crime of ingratitude, forgery has been added,—a capital felony following a breach of trust."—"It is too true, sir," replied the solicitor.

"I feel," said my grandfather mournfully, "for my old friend's son; and, God knows, I would give the sum twice told which the wretched man has robbed me of, that he had died in childhood, and left the world without disgracing the once pure name of his lamented father. What has become of the delinquent? Is it conjectured where he is?"

"It is supposed, sir," said the solicitor in reply, "that he has left the country. There are bills in circulation which he uttered with forged acceptances, and, if apprehended, his life must pay the penalty. Indeed, his character appears to have been for years declining; and latterly, it is said that he associated entirely with swindlers and gamblers of the lowest caste."—"That," said Aylmer, "there are persons below stairs to prove."

"It is almost unnecessary," replied the old man; "but as evidences are here, let them be called up;—I will fully satisfy myself of his villainy, and then endeavour to forget that such a wretch existed."

Aylmer left the room, and immediately returned, accompanied by the *roué* Evelyn and the husband of Lucinda Daly.

Their statements were short, and fully corroborated the worst suspicions against Sedley. For years he had lived by play, and when unsuccessful, procured money by forging his benefactor's name, and selling out portions of his stock. And yet, notwithstanding his crimes were known to many, from the seclusion of Mr. Harrison's life, years might have rolled over, and his villainy remained undetected by his guardian. The dividends, when due, were regularly transmitted to my grandfather—the defalcation of the principal consequently remained undiscovered; and had the old man died, Sedley's forgeries would have been unknown, and he would have succeeded to a large proportion of his guardian's wealth.

"Should I not be thankful," said Mr. Harrison, "that I lived long enough to ascertain the villain's infamy? my natural heir might otherwise have been despoiled of his inheritance, and my adopted daughter sacrificed to a wretch who would have ruined the being united to him."

"No; that could not have happened," said Williams, "Sedley is already married."

"Married!" exclaimed the old man, "and to whom?"—"To one who has for three years resided in your own house."

"Impossible!"

"It is true. Who introduced Annette into your family, sir?"—"The villain Sedley."

"Then, sir, he sent you his own wife."

"Traitress!" said the old gentleman, "she shall not be here another hour!"

"She is already gone, sir. This blow-up has been expected, and she was prepared to leave you at a moment's notice. Her trunks were removed to my house privately, and before I left home to keep my appointment with Mr. Aylmer, she arrived in a hackney-coach to fetch them away."

"Good heaven! what could the fellow's object be? Why place his own wife in a menial station, and why degrade her as a spy?"

"Service to her was no degradation," said Williams; "that was her proper place. Netty was a barmaid,—and, some years since, a very pretty one. Sedley frequented the house she lived at: he fancied her: and when seduction failed,—for though without a spark of principle; her cunning enabled her to outwit him,—in a moment of intoxication he married her. Mutual advantage rendered it necessary that the marriage should remain unpublished; and though each, before a month passed, hated the other, the interest of both induced them to keep their own secrets, until your death should render concealment unnecessary."

"I am indeed astonished! What a base and treacherous scoundrel! Well, well, punishment will follow fast upon his crimes."—"He will be a vagabond for life," observed the cynic.—"He will be outlawed for fraudulent bankruptcy," said the lawyer.—"And debarred from gentlemanly satisfaction," said the little colonel, "even though horsewhipped in the street."

"He is gone," said my grandfather. "He has robbed me of six thousand pounds; and yet, for the whole money, I would not meet the deceiver."

"Meet him!" exclaimed Colonel O'Donnel: "that, sir, is totally out of the question,—don't think of it—the fellow is excluded from a gentleman's prerogative, and out of the pale of honour altogether. Why, sir, not a man in England would take a message for you."

"Take a message for me!" and the old man stared. I burst into a fit of laughing.

"The colonel means, sir, that if you have

indulged in any hopes of shooting Mr. Sedley, you must abandon the intention."

"Ah! I understand it now;" and my grandfather smiled. "No, no, colonel; I'll not attempt it. But these gentlemen are wanted no longer,"—and he pointed to the *roué* and his companion,—"they may retire—for I wish to speak to you, John, in presence of your friends."

Aylmer whispered something to his evidences, and they rose to leave the room. At the door Williams made a stop.

"Captain Blake," he said, "take care of Sedley. He was at best a dangerous, and now he is a desperate, scoundrel. If he can, he will take deep revenge for his detection; and if his purse is not exhausted, believe me he has agents enough to effect his purpose, unless you are more cautious and less daring than you are said to be."

I thanked him for his warning—gave an assurance that it should be attended to—and promising to see him in a day or two, he left us and followed Evelyn.

"You must be on your guard," said the short commander; "fellows like Sedley are more formidable than bold enemies, and cowards more truculent than brave men. Do not expose yourself unnecessarily; and when you are out at night, take care and have the marking-irons in your pocket. If the villain cross you,"—and the colonel drew out his box,—"shoot him without a question."—Mr. Harrison shuddered.—"Fellows of that sort I would despatch with as little ceremony as tread a rat's life out. I will give you an exquisite case of pocket-pistols—Joe Manton's best. With one—you'll see it scratched across the barrel—I shot a footpad, who stopped me returning from dinner at the Pigeon House." The little man took a deliberate and self-satisfied pinch, while my grandfather eyed him with one of his suspicious glances.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have in your presence to propose certain terms to my grandson; and if they be acceded to, I shall at once declare him heir to my estates. Attend, John." I bowed deferentially.—"In the first place, you must leave the army, for my property requires a resident master."—"If such, sir," I replied, "be your wish, I shall agree to it."

"The second stipulation I make is, that you add my name to yours, and bear the arms of Harrison."—"On that score," said Aylmer, "there can be no difference: as, not three days since, he talked of turning Anabaptist, merely to obtain the benefit of another name." And he looked archly at Jack the Devil.

"What say you, John?"—"That in this, as in every other request you may be pleased to make, sir, my obedience shall be dependent on your pleasure."

"My third and last demand," said the old gentleman, "I must postpone till after dinner;—and, gentlemen, as my grandchild has granted my behests so freely, will you further oblige me by sharing my quiet meal? It is my first request, and I trust it will be conceded."

Aylmer and Jack acquiesced immediately. The little man declared his anxiety to oblige, but he was out of spirits—he had lost a dear friend.

"Indeed!" said my grandfather; "! and was his death sudden, colonel?"—"Oh yes, very much so—pistol-ball through the great artery.—Poor dear Bob!"

"Well, well, colonel, ours will be a sober feast."

"Heigh-ho! sir, I shall attend you. Ah! did you know what society lost in Bob Grady!—sweet a fellow as ever touched a trigger—I am certain it must have been the second's fault."

"And," said the old gentleman, with a quiet and caustic smile, "does much in the conduct of honourable affairs depend upon these gentlemen?"—"Everything, sir," returned the short commander:—"half the men nicked are shot by bringing bunglers to the ground. I remember myself, sir, the first time I ever went out friend, I won the toss, and stuck my man, through ignorance, into the angle of a hedge, where, by God's providence, and a thousand pities, the scoundrel was not shot—for he turned out a coward afterwards."

"Well, gentlemen, we meet one hour hence at dinner. I have some business with my friend," and he pointed to the solicitor. "Farewell!"

As we drove to Aylmer's lodgings, the transactions of the day were discussed; and, as in duty bound, I thanked the cynic for his valuable assistance, to which I attributed the fortunate issue of the late investigation.

"Well, gentlemen," said my counsellor, "I am delighted at the result; my diplomacy is over—'Othello's occupation's gone'—and, faith! considering the places I visited, and the scoundrels I consorted with, I am glad my agency has terminated. You are both"—and he addressed himself to Jack and me—"tolerably clear of scrapes and difficulties; may I inquire how long it is your good pleasure to continue so?"

"My *escapades* are over, Aylmer. I am too grateful for safe deliverance to tax Dame Fortune and yourself over much. As to my friend and kinsman——"

"You may include him in the general reformation," said Jack the Devil. "One exploit more, and my career shall close like my cousin's, and I will never furnish another paragraph to *The Morning Post*."

"Bravely resolved, gentlemen! Eschew barons and baronesses, street rows and *écarté*—the less you hop the better—and, above all things, avoid broken panels—or damaged woodwork will prove fatal to the family, no matter whether the accident fall out in Long's Hotel or the Barracks of Kilcommon."

At six we met Mr. Harrison in Clarges-street, and Emily was introduced to my friends. Annette's mysterious disappearance had, of course, created a general surprise, as my grandfather, unwilling that Sedley's delinquencies should be bruited to the world, had merely intimated that she was discharged for some misconduct, which it was not his pleasure to particularise.

It was strange how well the old man bore the mental and bodily exertion of the last few days, and I remarked it to Aylmer. The cynic shook his head—

"Ay! but it will kill him," he replied in a whisper. "It is the last gleaming in the lamp of life—circumstances have overtaxed his energies—the effort is too powerful for the old man, and nature must sink."

Dinner passed—the dessert was set down—and the servants retired. The old gentleman filled a glass with wine and water, and called upon his guests for a bumper. I observed his lips tremble,

and, as the decanter came round, his agitation visibly increased. He was, no doubt, preparing for something that required an effort: and to one whose frame was so feeble it was a painful task.

"I should rise, gentlemen," he said, in faltering tones; "alas!. I have not strength to do it."

Emily got up to leave us, but her guardian motioned that she should remain; she acquiesced, and Mr. Harrison continued:

"I have in your presence, gentlemen, asked from my son—for such I may term him now—two requests, and they have been freely granted. The third, however, is wanting. I postponed stating it till now: another's assent is required, or the object of my wishes would be incomplete. To-morrow at twelve, I will entreat you to favour me once more with your company, and witness the execution of a deed that vests in my acknowledged heir the estates and domains of Stainsbury: but it goes to him conditionally. Come here, John." I rose and obeyed him, while he took Miss Clifden's hand and placed it within mine. "This is the sole encumbrance—and now, God bless you both!"

The scene was painful; Emily burst into tears, and hung upon the old man's bosom.—The cynic was not unmoved—the little colonel's coldness, when in exciting situations, was in this visibly disturbed—and even Jack the Devil threatened to become a weeper. I gently detached my beautiful mistress from my grandfather's embrace.

"There, John," he said, "conduct her to the drawing-room, and let me and our good friends know on your return when we shall attend you to the church. Recollect, my children, how feeble my mortal tenure is; and the sooner I am permitted to witness the union of those I love, and must shortly leave, the better."

I led her from the parlour. In a few minutes our bridal day was settled—for I had no artificial delicacy to combat, no affected modesty to overcome. Emily, the child of innocence, yielded to my ardent solicitations—her guardian's wishes were obeyed—and the third morning was appointed for Emily to kneel with me at the altar, and become "mine own" for ever.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COLONEL'S ELOPEMENT.—A STRANGE EPISTLE.

"There had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements!"

The Rivals.

"Fye, my lord, fye! a soldier, and afeard?"

Macbeth.

I RETURNED to the old man and his guests, announced the success of my interview with Emily, and received the hearty congratulations of all.

Mr. Harrison appeared particularly gratified.

"And now, gentlemen," he said, "may I plead the privilege of age, and leave you under the care of a younger and more enduring bacchanal? Ring for Robert."

I did so;—the attendant came.

"Give me your arm, John. Some months ago one was sufficient; but now I need a second supporter. Gentlemen, don't spare the claret: when I was at your ages, so much business as we have this day transacted would have been a fair excuse for an additional flask. We meet at noon to-morrow. Good-night!"

I assisted him to his chamber, and, at his own request, left him to Robert's care, and hastened to rejoin the company below.

My friends were in high spirits;—Aylmer, at the complete success of his stratagems and intrigue to detect Sedley's villany; Jack, I presume, on being a Benedict in expectancy; and the little colonel, from the perusal of a letter the footman had delivered while I was in attendance on my grandfather. The epistle which caused such pleasure to the commander was written in barbarous characters, and, as the cynic observed, "brief as woman's love;" but in the enclosure the charm appeared to lie.

"Here, my dear fellow;" and Colonel O'Donnel presented a paper to my kinsman. Jack hastily unfolded it; it was his own acknowledgment to the baron for a thousand!

"Why, what means this?" said he with the evil *sobriquet*. — "Nothing," replied the short commander, "that cannot be readily explained. You gave me, my dear boy, in the conduct of a certain delicate affair, a *carte blanche*, and I used it freely. I insisted, on your part, for immediate satisfaction; and the baron, on his, for instant payment. According to my ideas, the thing was to be settled by the pistol; according to Hartzmann's, a cheque upon a banker would do it far better. Short negotiations are best: I declared that I would post him in the club-houses, and flog him the first opportunity; and, as accident had furnished me with the certain knowledge that, in early life, he had been sentenced to the galleys for a fraud, and evaded the sentence by some underhand influence with a royal favourite, I used it on the occasion—gave him three hours for deliberation—and *voilà le résultat*."

"Never had a brace of sinners such inimitable advisers!" I exclaimed. "Ah, Jack, what do you not owe the colonel? For me, were I to commit a burglary, Aylmer would establish a clear *alibi*, and save me from the noose."

"Indeed, gentlemen," said the cynic, "I thought you both bid fair to achieve that honourable end: but your finale will be commonplace after all. The blind gentlewoman will bring you through—and, in the *dénouement* of your short and virtuous careers, a hymeneal will supercede the hempen catastrophe I had once anticipated. But now, as your history"—and he turned to me—"'is well nigh done,' may I inquire when a similar result may be expected to attend this exemplary young gentleman?"

"Aylmer, you know among friends that concealment is unnecessary," responded Jack the Devil; "and if fortune smiles, and money can procure post-horses—barring ups-and-downs upon the road—I shall precede my worthy cousin, and show him a virtuous example."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the little colonel.

"Yes. I had a letter before I left Long's, from the dear girl: she tells me, John, that her traps are now at your hotel; and I am desired to have all ready at eight o'clock to-morrow evening, two or three miles from town. It is arranged that you shall receive Sophia and her maid and duly transfer both to my safe custody."

"Thank you for the preference," I replied.

"And could you not carry off a director's daughter, Jack, but I must be brought in as principal in the misdemeanour? Send Aylmer, or O'Donnel; both are adepts in love affairs, and up to mischief in all its varieties."

"Excuse me," said the cynic, "anything you please but abducting heiresses. I have a pious horror of the Chancellor. Probably the colonel——"

"Pardon me, my dear fellow," said the little man, as he sipped a glass of claret leisurely; "it's not in my line. If either of the gentlemen want a message taken, I'll carry it, were it to the Master of the Rolls,—ay, or the Speaker of the House of Commons."

"Why, I did imagine, certainly, that your joint counsel might be serviceable to my friend Jack."

"Mine," said the cynic, "would only go to implore him to avoid loose linchpins and lame horses."—"And, in the event of pursuit," rejoined the little colonel, "shoot the leader, my dear boy, before you fire at the postillion. The worst consequence that can result is only paying for a post-horse."

"But, colonel," said I, "for one so perfectly *au fait* in all honourable matters, how comes it that you eschew '*affaires de cœur*' so religiously?"—"Why, faith," replied the short commander, "because the only one I ever was engaged in turned out a decided failure."

"Indeed, colonel!"

"Ay," said the little man, "and I'll tell it to you in a few words. When I got my troop in the 17th Lights, the regiment was quartered in Birmingham. Tom Barry, who was killed, poor fellow! at Toulouse, was then my senior sub, and through him I was introduced to the family of a wealthy spur-maker, who was reputed to be worth a plum, and had an only daughter to inherit it. Now the young lady had a fancy for huzzars, and was moreover tired of the thrall of a maiden aunt and the *surveillance* of a young governess, although the said *gouvernante* was the prettiest girl in the town. After the customary formalities, Miss Julia agreed to elope with me—become Mrs. O'Donnel first, and ask the spurrier's consent afterwards. All went on beautifully, and as the old tradesman frequented a weekly club, we named the night when he would be engaged there for a bolt to Gretna Green."—The colonel sighed heavily, and filled his glass anew.—"I had," he continued, "unfortunately an Irish servant, and employed him to provide a trustworthy postillion. From an accursed nationality, Pat Rooney engaged a second cousin of his own, who, he said, 'was deaf as a post, but drove like the devil.' The hour approached—I for concealment threw on a trooper's cloak, and, determining to take Father Time by the forelock, was at the corner of the appointed street a full half-hour before that specified by my Dulcinea in her last billet.

"Well, gentlemen, the night was dark as Erebus, and before I had taken a third turn on the flagway, up came the lady of my love with a carpet bag under her arm! She was closely muffled, and I rolled in my roquelaure to the nose. Pat asked no questions, but bundled bag and baggage into the postchaise—I followed—Rooney shut the door, waved his hand to his second cousin, and off we went 'like a hunt.'

"This was the trying moment. The fair one threw herself upon my breast, and sobbed audibly. 'Silence in love' is more expressive 'than words, however witty;' and, till we cleared the town, she hung upon my bosom in speechless tenderness. On we went, for the deaf one drove like a whirlwind. 'Speak, my sweet girl!' I faintly ejaculated, 'and let your adorer listen to that silver voice again.'

"'You have caught cold, my love,' said my inamorata. 'Lord! how hoarse you are!—Ah! Tom, what a sacrifice I have made! This is the second place I have lost by you!"

"Hell and furies! it was a strange voice.—'*Hoarse!—the second place!*—why, who the devil are you?' I exclaimed.

"'Murder! I'm ruined!' was the reply: 'stop the carriage, or I'll swear my life against you!' And she threw down the glass.

"'Ay, stop!' I bellowed, 'or I'll prosecute you, madam, for abduction.' And down dropped the second window.

"'Stop! for the love of God!' she cried.

"'Pull up! or I'll blow your brains out!' I shouted. Though we could have been heard easily a mile off, our united screams fell feebly on the tympanum of the deaf driver. He looked about; I was gesticulating in a rage, and she exclamatory as the heroine of a melo-drama. The bothered scoundrel thought we apprehended a pursuit.

"'Arrah, take things asy, jewels?—don't be afeerd, for the devil won't catch yees.' Down came the thong, and as we had falling-ground, off we went like lightning.

"To stop him was an idle attempt—nothing but a pistol bullet would have done it; and, as he carried us away, we had time to come to an explanation. The governess, and not the pupil, was my *compagnon de voyage*. She had arranged an elopement with Tom Barry, unknown to the spurmaker's heiress;—Tom was never punctual in his life—I was before time, and he after it, and hence our mutual disappointment.

"Well, gentlemen, you must hear the finale. Barry was enraged at me for taking off his mistress, and I naturally savage at losing through him a fortune and a wife. The business was referred to a couple of gentlemen, who asked no questions, but adjourned to the race-course, where we interchanged shots, were both grazed, interrupted by the civil powers, and bound over to be pacific. We had then leisure to inquire into the affair, and the thing was accommodated by mutual explanations. But alas! the mischief was irremediable. The spurrier despatched his daughter to the country, and placed her under the guardianship of an old maid, whose domicile was impregnable; and the *gouvernate* lost her character and place, by a deaf driver and a dilatory gallant."

"No wonder," said the cynic, when the short commander had concluded his narrative, "that you have an objection to forced marches on Gretna, after so serious a mishap; and I think our friend of the Fusileers must be aide-de-camp to-morrow to his worthy kinsman, the ex-captain of the Galway."

"I suppose I must," I replied. "But will you, Aylmer, undertake a less hazardous duty for me?"—"Let me hear what the service is, and then I will answer you."

"Fair enough. I promised to assist your old acquaintance Lucy to carry her hopeful helpmate to America; will you see the money disbursed in securing their passage, providing necessaries for their voyage, and all the requisite etcæteræ?"—"Well, in this affair, I agree to be your representative. Poor Lucy! I remember when she was lady of the ascendant.

"'Holy Saint Francis! what a change is here!
Is Rosaline, whom thou didst love so dear,
So soon forgotten?'

It gets late, and I shall be moving."

"And so shall I," said Jack the Devil. "I must sleep a sufficiency to-night to carry me 'over the border.'"

All took their leave, and I joined Emily in the drawing-room, where she was expecting me to say "good night." Lovers are tedious in their adieux, and the clock struck eleven before I could tear myself away.

It was a sweet, quiet starlight night: the streets were filled with passengers, but I was too much occupied in fancying approaching happiness, to heed the crowds that in great thoroughfares like those I passed, were every moment flitting by. In Piccadilly a woman attracted my attention: a man, apparently a servant, accompanied her: she looked me in the face, and, as I thought, with remarkable attention. Her companion walked quickly on, and I observed that the female's head was repeatedly turned back.

We came to the crossing of Vere-street, and there our progress was impeded by a sudden disturbance, occasioned by the detection of a pickpocket. Of course I kept at the outside of the crowd to save my watch and note-case. I had always a fancy for looking at a row:—a dozen drunken watchmen were engaged, and ten of them were pulling off people, who, like myself, were merely spectators. The true delinquent took advantage of their mistake, shook off the only man that held him, and disappeared; and an unhappy sufferer was conducted to the watch-house, for the high crime of having his pocket picked.

I was exceedingly amused: while I watched the *dénouement* of the scene, my arm was gently pressed; I looked about, and a female figure, closely muffled in a cloak, thrust into my hand a crumpled paper, and, before I could ask a question, vanished in the crowd. Pshaw!—it was some wretched *intrigante*—she had mistaken me for another.

The mob dispersed—the crossing was passable—and, unconscious that I held the billet in my hand, I reached my domicile in Berners-street. The waiter lighted my candles, and gave me some letters of no moment.

"There was a lady called on you, sir, this evening."

"Indeed; who was she?"—"She gave no name, sir; but was particular anxious to see you."

"Was she ever here before?"—"Never, sir. Quite strange to the porter; and, as she called three times, we remarked her particularly."

"Describe her, William."—"Closely wrapped up in a dark silk cloak, and——"

"Was she tall?"—"She was, sir; and if one could judge by a partial glance, uncommonly handsome."

I thought of the muffled stranger in the street-row—she, too, was a fine-looking person. Her note was in my hand—I examined it—it bore no address, and was folded loosely. I despatched William for *The Courier*, and then unclosed the billet I had so unceremoniously received.

The paper was coarse, and the folding betokened hurry or alarm; but the contents were more extraordinary, and limited to a word and a hieroglyph. I examined the letter carefully; nothing was discernible but "Beware!" followed by a rude drawing of a drinking-glass. What could the paper mean?—was it some idle joke to intimidate me? Who could the writer be? None of my friends would dare to trifle with me, or attempt anything so puerile.

William at this moment handed me a small parcel. I ordered brandy-and-water, and, when he disappeared, opened the packet;—it was a mahogany box, containing O'Donnel's far-famed marking-irons, as he termed them. No arrival could be more apposite—there lay a counter-charm against the danger which the lady's note intimated. I unlocked the case, and the pistols merited the eulogy the little colonel had bestowed upon them. They were splendid weapons certainly—perfectly efficient, and small enough for concealment. I loaded them with studied accuracy; and if, indeed, any harm were intended, I determined to avail myself of the mysterious warning.

"This, after all," said I, as I mused over my glass of cognac—"this must be idle trickery. Can Sedley be concerned? very improbable: he will be more anxious to secure his own safety than endanger that of another. Shall I then despise the admonition of the dark-mantled gentlewoman? No, I will be prepared; and if my path is crossed, as Hamlet says, 'I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.'"

I retired to my room, for the first time bolted the door, placed O'Donnel's tools upon the table, and with as much precaution as is used at dinner in a proclaimed barony, where the company are provided with pistols and plates together, I went to sleep, dreaming of love and murder, bridals and banditti.

CHAPTER XIII.

HYMENEAL MOVEMENTS.—VISIT TO CAPTAIN HAWKINS, AND THE CONSEQUENCES.

"*Ferdinand.* Can you inform me for what purpose they are gone away?
Clara. They are gone to be married, I believe."
The Duenna.

"*King.* Gertrude, do not drink.
Queen. I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me.
King. It is the poisoned cup."
Hamlet.

WHEN I awoke next morning, and William had withdrawn the window curtains, I was struck by the altered appearance my room presented to the eye. Yesterday, its simple toilet, and the solitary portmanteau it exhibited, gave it the air of the dormitory of some honest traveller; but now there was such a miscellaneous collection of trunks, pistols, and bonnet-boxes, that I felt doubts of its identity, and half believed that I had mistaken another apartment for my own, and usurped the chamber of some married gentleman. Miss Sophia proved herself a good soldier, and

had made ample preparations for a northern campaign, if one might judge from the extent of her baggage; and I should have safely doubled the wager I proposed, when I asserted that her maid for the last week had done little else but pack her lady's personals. Before my toilet was complete, Jack arrived to breakfast; and afterwards I accompanied him to Long Acre, where he provided a light travelling chariot for the intended expedition.

At twelve we drove to Clarges-street, and found Aylmer and the colonel already arrived, and my grandfather's solicitor in waiting. Two parchments of awful dimensions were lying on the table, and these, the lawyer informed us, were a deed of gift and a marriage settlement. Soon after, Mr. Harrison joined us—the parchments were read—Emily summoned to attend, and, in due form, the high contracting powers—to use legal *parlance*—signed, sealed, and delivered. We separated immediately: I, with Aylmer and the lawyer, to procure a licence at Doctors' Commons, and Jack and the short commander on some important vocation of their own.

As we drove into the city, I mentioned my last night's adventure to the cynic, and showed him the curious epistle I had received. He examined it with great attention.

"This is indeed a singular *billet-doux*, and were it directed to a drunkard, a person might comprehend its meaning; but addressed to you, the thing appears absurd; and yet the woman's perseverance in delivering it—that puzzles me. It is unaccountable!" And, turning to the lawyer, he inquired "was Sedley off?"—"I should say that he was, undoubtedly. Two forgeries of his are discovered already, and the officers have had a warrant given them for his apprehension. I am quite certain, that before this he has quitted the country, and sailed, most probably, for America."

"Yes—he will not risk arrest. From all I can learn of his character, he is more of a scheming scoundrel than a bold villain. But here we are in Holborn—set down Mr. Hamlyn."

We stopped the coach, and the solicitor turned into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.—"And now," said Aylmer, "let me have that scapegrace's address, and I'll proceed to find out the heiress of the Dalys, and ship her off according to your wishes." And we drove on to Berners-street.

In the drawing-room, as I expected, I found a note from Sophia. I broke the seal, favoured the cynic with the contents, and he made his own observations.

"'*My dear Coz*,'—"How quickly she acknowledges the relationship!"—'*My resolution fails, and I am convinced that I shall never have courage to venture—unless you persuade me.*'—"Ay, there is a saving clause in her demurrer."—'*I fear I shall want hardiesse when the hour comes to fulfil my rash engagement with that wild wretch whom I am weak enough to love.*'—"Not at all,—a squadron of the Blues would not keep her from him."—'*Heigho! what will my dear mother say when I am missed?*'—"Ah, that is very important; but she will take chance of hearing mamma's remarks on her return to town."—'*Filial duty tells me I am doing wrong.*'—"Filial duty may as well keep quiet."—'*And could I violate the promise which in an unguarded moment I made?*'—"She would not do it."—'*But it is too late!*'—"Ay, I knew that would be the excuse for keeping it religiously."—'*You had better, my dear friend, be at the corner of Duchess-street at half-past seven precisely.*'—"Yes, take care of that, John; she will be there ten minutes before the time."—'*And if my courage fail not*——'—"She'll be on this occasion as brave as Boadicea!"—"*I will intrust myself to your protection.*

'*Always and affectionately yours,*

'*S. H. M.*

'*Portland-place, 1 o'clock.*'

'*P.S.—Flavell, my maid, tells me that she left at your hotel two trunks, a dressing-case, two bonnet-boxes, and a carpet-bag.*'—"Well done, timidity! Not a bad kit for a sudden march."—'*Will you, like a dear good fellow, have them carefully put into Jack's carriage?*'—"Come, notwithstanding her agitation, she's up to business. Be punctual,—she'll be with you before Langham clock strikes the second chime. Now, in the mean time, what are you going to do?"

"I shall dine early in Clarges-street—meet Jack here; at seven, despatch the baggage; and at half-past it, levant with the director's daughter. Have I not sufficient occupation for the remainder of this day, Aylmer?"—"Why, pretty well. Then, good-bye! we will meet to-morrow," he said, and left me.

I had an hour to spare, and wrote to some of my old friends in the Rifles, and then walked over to Clarges-street. How different were my feelings—how changed my situation from those I experienced on the first morning I was in London, when I drove to the old man's house in Baker-street! Few as the days were that intervened, how fraught with interest and adventure! Not two weeks since, I entered town uncertain whether my relative would admit, or even acknowledge me, and full of all the doubtings of a lover. Since then, I had been received and rejected by my mistress—tolerated and disinherited by my grandfather,—saved by a combination of lucky events, over which I had no control—and now I was seeking that stern old man, not timidly and suspected, but the affianced husband of his heiress, and the absolute master of six thousand pounds a year! It is, as the song goes, "a whirligig world;" and though my ups and downs were many, and fast upon each other, Dame Fortune had made honourable reparation, and placed me almost beyond the chances of human mutability.

Emily—my own tried Emily—welcomed me, and in a few minutes the old man joined us. It seemed that in his recollection all past *désagrément* were forgotten. We were all happy—all pleased with each other.

When dinner was over, I told him of Jack the Devil's intended expedition. He laughed; and I verily believed he had pardoned, for my sake, half my cousin's delinquencies.

"And do you *really* think he will reform, John?" said the old gentleman.—"Indeed I do, sir. His father's difficulties—his own complete breakdown—the heartlessness of fashionable friends—the profligacy of an unprincipled woman—the ruin of gaming—all have practically taught him that severe lesson, that otherwise would have fallen on an unheeding ear. Jack, sir, is single-hearted—honourable, after his own fashion,

to an absurdity; and now that the heart is engaged—and I know it is—he will become a happier and a steadier man than you could anticipate. But I must leave you, sir."

"There is no danger in your assisting him, John?"—"None in the world, sir, unless we run away with the wrong lady, like Colonel O'Donnel."

I bade my grandfather good-night, took leave of my beautiful bride, and promised to be with her to breakfast.

Jack was true to his appointment, and had directed his servant to bring his carriage to my hotel, to receive the personal effects of the fair fugitive, which, for safe keeping, she had committed to my charge. My cousin was in glorious spirits, and contemplated the abstraction of the director's daughter with the same excitement that a soldier meditates the surprise of an outpost, or a sailor the cutting out a prize.

"Come, John, let us have one bottle of claret. Ring, man; we will have time enough."

The sound of carriage-wheels brought him to the window; it was his own travelling-chariot, with four spanking bays.

"Look here, John; some fun in this—none of your humdrum affair, with full consent of parents and guardians, marching up a church-aisle, followed by a well-dressed mob of stupid swains and simpering misses, the women libelling each other's looks, and the men whispering what a d—d fool you are. Here we go—off like a fox-hunt—trunks packed—servants in the rumble—lamps lit—pistols loaded."

"Why, what the deuce—pistols! You are not going to shoot the girl?"—"No; I only intend to marry her. But, you know, some devil might come across one,—and there's no time in Scotch trips for stopping on the road."

"Speaking of pistols, I may as well put O'Donnel's nonpareils in my pocket; any exploit in your company is not the safest."

I stepped into my bedroom, where Jack's valet was removing his lady's luggage, took the pistols from the table, and rejoined the bridegroom elect, who was talking to the waiter.

"Come, William—tumblers, if you please. We have no time for sipping light claret out of nutshells like these. Nine minutes past seven—send for a coach."

The waiter returned, brought large glasses and a letter, received his orders and departed; and while Jack the Devil filled high bumpers, I broke the seal, and read aloud the following curious invitation:—

"If the son of Colonel Blake will so far oblige an attached companion of his lamented father as to favour him with a few minutes' conversation at any time this evening that would be most convenient, he would make an old man happy. Broken health, and an infirmity of the limbs, must be the writer's apology for not calling on Captain Blake. As he leaves town to-morrow for Brighton, he expects the honour of a call this evening.

"P.S.—Please to inquire for Captain Hawkins."

"Very strange this," I said.

"Where is the note addressed from?" said Jack.—"The White Lion, Borough."

"Oh! some country inn, where hop-dealers and horse-jockies put up at. I know the place."

"What can the man want with me?"—"Money, to be sure; a regular begging letter."

"Then why not put his name to it, and one could have sent him something. I won't go. Who the devil can the man be?"—"Egad! I know," exclaimed Jack. "I'll bet a pony it's old Captain Macgennis."

"He would have signed his name."—"Not he: poor as a Scotch peer, and proud as Lucifer. He used to tell me interminable stories about his 'dare Caasar,' as he called your father. I saw him about ten days ago in the Strand: he was looking ill, and, only I was in an awful hurry, I would have stopped and spoken to him."

"But wherefore this concealment?"—"For the same cause that ruins half Connaught—family pride. Pish! man, though the old fool is starving on a subaltern's half-pay, he's as lofty in his own estimation as a field-marshal."

The quarter chimed—Jack's servant announced that all was ready, and my coach at the door.

"Come, John, fill a parting glass for luck. Here have we been six minutes finishing one poor flask. 'Odds whips and wheels.' Now for the road!"

We started in different directions: Jack for the place of rendezvous, somewhere beyond Islington, and I for Portland-place, to pick up Miss Sophy and her waiting-maid.

I pulled up three or four houses from Duchess-street; left the coach, and proceeded down the flag-way to reconnoitre. The director's hall and drawing-room were brilliantly lighted, and, from appearances, I should have set the house down rather as the scene of a civic feast, than the place from which a young lady was levanting. I walked up and down like a sentinel. Three-quarters chimed,—no fair fugitive appeared. Aylmer for once was wrong, and filial duty had triumphed over youthful passion. "Eight" struck from Langham tower. I heard the coachman stamp upon the pavement to warm his feet, for the night was gloomy and cold. Five minutes more: I turned my eyes towards the appointed corner; but no female figure met their glance. Was there a blow-up—a discovery? There must be something wrong, and I exclaimed with Lydia Languish, "There will be no elopement after all!"

What a rage Jack the Devil would be in! Well, he could not blame me, for I was before my time at 'the trysting-place.' I strolled quietly past the director's, turned again, when suddenly two figures issued from the area and walked quickly down before me. I came up within a few paces, but they were so closely muffled that recognition was impossible. They passed the coach—that looked bad; they came to a dead halt at the corner—that looked better. "Sophia!" I whispered, as I rushed by them.

"Is it you, Blake?" said a soft voice in reply.—"Yes, my dear girl: I have been waiting for you. Come, jump in!" And before three minutes we were on the New Road, and driving at honest Jarvis' best pace for the place appointed.

Poor Sophia was sadly affected. As we passed her father's house, she burst into tears, and wept for a quarter of an hour. From the lady of the bedchamber I learned that the delay was occasioned by a dinner-party, and that neither mistress nor maid could effect an escape until the

entertainment occupied the guests, and engaged the servants in attendance on them.

"Now, Sophia, I thought I had got a stouter cousin than you prove. While you are crying here, Lord! what a fume Jack is in at the Stag! Heaven send he may not employ his idle time in flogging the postillions—or——"

"Probably he'll flog me;" and Sophia smiled faintly.

"That you will suffer for this delay, I have no doubt; but what the penalty will be, you can best tell. But we must surely be near the place?"

"Flavell knows this neighbourhood—she can tell us."

The *soubrette* announced that we were close to the White Stag; and in another minute we stopped, and Jack appeared in waiting.

To transfer the lady to the carriage, and the maid to the rumble, was but a moment's work, Jack secured the attendant against cold by wrapping her in his boat-cloak, while I took care of *mademoiselle*. Sophia had thrown off her muffling,—and a prettier or more piquant-looking runaway by lamplight never took the Northern road on a dark night.

"Farewell, Sophia!—write to me when you have time."

"And are you not to accompany us?" said the fair fugitive.

"Heaven pardon your duplicity! You would wish me in the Tower before we travelled the second stage. But as you are so fond of society in a carriage, could you not persuade Flavell to make number three?"—"No; poor girl! the inside of a coach always gives her a headache," she replied with infinite archness.

"Well, Jack has packed her in the rumble; so give me some two or three of the nineteen kisses you owe me, and I shall bid you farewell."

All was ready,—I closed the door—slipped my note-case into my kinsman's hand, lest, in the event of delay, or any casualty occur, supplies might fail,—the postillions got the word—whips cracked—the chariot started—and off went Jack the Devil and the director's daughter at a pace which told that the boys expected double payment, and the horses were nothing but "good ones."

I followed the fugitives with my eye, until a turn of the road shut them from my view; then embarked in my own sober vehicle, and proceeded back to town.

I looked at my watch—it wanted a quarter to ten—and where should I kill an hour? It was too late to go to Clarges-street—Aylmer probably would be out, and O'Donnel never returned before midnight to his lodgings. I thought of Captain Hawkins' note—what if I drove to his inn and visited the comrade of my father? I should never have an hour more perfectly disengaged than the present one; and when I reached the Peacock, I desired the coachman to drive into the city and set me down on London Bridge.

When I discharged the vehicle, I walked briskly into Blackman-street, and easily made out the house where my father's friend had taken up his temporary residence. It was one of those ancient caravanseras common in that part of Southwark, having an open area within a gateway, surrounded by sleeping-rooms, and approached by wooden galleries and stairs. There was a tap or drinking-room inside the archway, and I inquired from the barmaid if "Captain Hawkins was at home?" After some delay I was shown into a large sitting-room, and found therein a grey-haired and venerable-looking personage, who proved to be my correspondent, and a tall slight young man, who, he informed me, was his nephew.

I opened the conversation by acknowledging the receipt of his note, and asking "what his commands were, or in what way I could be serviceable?"

The old man thanked me politely, and added, that to obtain pecuniary assistance was not his object in soliciting an interview; but, on the contrary, he wished to repay a debt due to his old friend my father. His story was a simple one. Many years before, he had been ordered on foreign service, and when about to embark was arrested for a paltry sum of fifteen pounds. My father had accidentally heard of the distress of a brother soldier, and discharged the debt. Captain Hawkins had been twenty years in India—made some money—returned recently—inquired after the heir of his former benefactor, and now requested leave to restore the sum that my father had so long since and so opportunely obliged him with. As he spoke, he handed me a banker's check for the amount, which I peremptorily declined accepting. Nothing could exceed the old man's gratitude—he was affected to tears, for he applied his handkerchief—while I pleaded the lateness of the hour and the distance to my hotel, and rose to take my leave.

The old soldier seemed very unwilling to part with me; and observed, that as I had so far to go, I should probably require a carriage. I told him I should certainly, and that I intended directing my course to the first coach-stand. This, he replied, was unnecessary—there were conveyances immediately beside us, and he would send for one. Accordingly, he rang the bell, and the person that answered it was despatched to procure the vehicle.

I laid down my hat again: the veteran said he had a favour to ask, surely I would grant it? While the carriage was being brought, would I share a bottle of wine with him? I declined it. "Well, even one glass of negus—something merely to drink to the memory of his lamented friend my father?" I saw that a refusal pained him—consented; and, as the waiter had been sent out, he despatched his nephew to the bar to bring glasses for himself and me.

The young man returned speedily, placed the wine and water before us, and then took up a newspaper and retired to another table.

The veteran touched my glass with his. "This is the memory," he said with considerable emotion, "of my beloved friend and lamented benefactor!" and he drank to the bottom of the glass. I finished but half the contents of mine, and returned the tumbler to the table—for in truth the wine was infamous.

"Ah! Captain Blake," said the old man, "you do not like that negus: you and I have been too long accustomed to wines of a better quality, to relish what one meets in obscure inns like this. But we soldiers know how to take the rough with the smooth."

I inquired if the coach had come; for I found a nausea in my stomach, and wished to quit the room. The young man laid down his paper and

went out to ask. Surely I was not tipsy? and yet my eyes felt misty, and I heard the veteran's remarks confusedly. Momentarily I felt more strangely affected—an unconquerable drowsiness overpowered me. I leaned my head back—visions and phantasies tormented me. The old man's figure faded from my sight—external objects disappeared altogether—I became utterly unconscious—and next minute dropped upon the bench insensible.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOUSE OF MURDER.

"I woke.—Where was I? Do I see
A human face look down on me?
Is this a chamber where I lie?
And is it mortal, yon bright eye
That watches me with gentle glance?
I closed my own again once more,
As doubtful that the former trance
Could not as yet be o'er."—*Mazeppa.*

AFTER falling on the table, I have no recollection of anything that occurred for many hours. I learned, upon subsequent inquiry, that my insensibility was attributed to drunkenness, and that the old man and his companion had removed me (as they said) to my own lodgings in a coach. In a low hostel like the Lion, where beastly inebriety was a common event, cases like mine would occasion neither sympathy nor surprise; and the inmates of the house were no doubt too happy in getting rid of a troublesome and unprofitable customer.

I must have remained in deathlike torpidity for a considerable space of time, as the first dawn of morning was gleaming through the window when I first unclosed my eyes. Strange and fearful images of the past floated indistinctly across my memory. Prisons, manacles, instruments of death—wild, vague, and nameless horrors distracted me. I strove to turn—my limbs felt cramped and confined; mechanically I stretched my hand out—and, by Heaven! an iron fetter met my touch. Where was I? The light was yet too feeble to penetrate the chamber; drowsiness oppressed me still; I slumbered—awoke again—my lips were parched—my brain was burning. Was I on earth still—or in some place of misery and punishment? The infernal sensations I underwent will never pass from my recollections.

Suddenly a strong light fell upon my eyes: I looked up—two men were standing at my bedside; but I was still too much confused to scrutinize their persons, or heed the few words that fell from them. Presently they disappeared—the light vanished, and I slept—if such agonizing stupor could be called sleep.

It was clear day before I looked round again. The chamber was small, square, and lighted by a solitary window, placed at such a distance from the ground, that, if standing under, I could not have reached it with my extended arm. It contained not an article of furniture but one old table: yet it was a singular room—the walls were hung round with mattresses, the floor covered with thick matting, and neither door nor outlet of any kind was visible.

Was I then dreaming? I raised my hand to rub my forehead—it was checked suddenly by a manacle! I threw aside the bed-covering—fetters secured my ankles! Had Reason left her seat—or was this reality? I must be mad. I turned my head away, buried it deep in the counterpane, and tried to persuade myself that all was a dream.

While in a state of mental agony that no mortal suffering could equal, I felt my shoulder touched. I turned sharply, and a woman was bending over me. I would have spoken, but her finger was pressed upon her lip, and the expression of her countenance was so fearfully intelligent, that I understood it, and remained mute.

"Rouse your energies!" she whispered in my ear; "there will be persons here immediately. Be dumb—pretend to sleep—and leave the rest to me."

Before the words were almost uttered, she disappeared, leaving her visit questionable whether it were not unreal and delusory. But suspense was quickly ended: I heard a noise—peeped through my half-closed eyelids—and two men, muffled and masked, were standing beside my rude couch. Though still mentally confused, the female's warning was not forgotten—I breathed heavily, and affected stupor.

"Why, what a dose you gave him!" said the shorter ruffian of 'the twain.' "Rouse him up! the thing must be done, for another day may ruin us." The voice was Sedley's.

"It is useless," replied the tall one; "Hensley overdid the business. I told him distinctly to put but twenty drops into the tumbler: he added forty to the wine. Had he drunk off the whole, no earthly power could have saved him. He must not be disturbed—it would answer no purpose, and only delay matters."

"But, zounds!" rejoined Sedley with impatience, "while he sleeps the officers may find some clue to our retreat, and I shall be apprehended."—"And pray," said the poisoner, "am I on a bed of roses? What is the difference between us? If detected, you stand a fair chance of the rope, and I a dead certainty of transportation."

"Well—what is to be done?" inquired Sedley, impatiently. "It was a blasted bungling affair, from first to last."—"I beg to differ with you," rejoined the tall mask: "I never managed a more hazardous one, and a few hours will remedy the only mistake committed."

"In the devil's name, then, be it so! What are we to do?"—"Leave him quiet till evening—give him some liquids to neutralize the morphine, and make all ready for an immediate start after we bleed his banker in the morning."

"Will he require to be looked after?"—"Do you mean for safe keeping? The dose he swallowed last night will save all trouble on that score; and as to recovering him from the narcotic, Marianne shall manage that."

"He is quite safe then? After your account is cleared, remember, he is left to me."

"Let him but write my check, and to your tender mercies I commit him. Safe!"—and the taller ruffian turned over the counterpane, and examined the manacle and fetters; "if in morphine and cold iron there is security, this honest gentleman is safe."—"I think so."

"Of that be certain, my friend. And now let us pack everything, and at dusk we'll drive to

Netty's, and deposit them. Come, I will send Marianne to attend our patient."

The ruffians laughed sarcastically—raised a mattress from the wall—passed through the aperture, and left me.

They were mistaken. I had not swallowed so much of the infernal mixture as they believed I had; its deleterious effects were passing rapidly away—fear and imminent danger had roused my dormant energies, and the colloquy I had overheard, dispelled any remnant of the lethargy their murderous draught had produced.

Escape was now my first consideration, and I examined the room attentively. The window was the only outlet to attempt it by. It was strongly grated—the sash turning on a pivot, and opening and closing by a cord, of which but a fragment remained. I tried to free myself from the manacle, but the scoundrels had secured me beyond the chance of any power of my own being able to effect my liberation; and I turned in despair from idle and impotent attempts, to think how versatile was Fortune's smile—how rapid the wreck of mortal happiness.

What was I yesterday? My God! I felt as if my heart would burst when I contrasted the present with the past, and pondered on the ruin a few brief hours had effected. Ay! yesterday—I had been gifted with a noble inheritance, and to-morrow would have made the loveliest girl that ever plighted faith to man "mine own." What was I now?—I shuddered as I asked the question;—a powerless wretch—a fettered captive, occupying a murderer's den, and doomed to fall by an assassin! Was there a chance of escape left?—had I a struggle for life, no matter how desperate the odds might be against success? No, no: before another sunset, I should close my career by secret means, or perish by open violence!

Miserable as such thoughts were, another that crossed my mind was more distressing still. How tamely had I become the victim of these ruffians!—how stupidly had I fallen into their murderous hands! I—forewarned by the strange epistle—in the centre of a populous city—with weapons on my person! here I was, abject as a woman, with a throat ready for the slayer's knife, whenever the hour came! O God! had I but fallen as men fall, my foot free, my hand at liberty to strike in my mortal struggle—but trepanned, immured, slaughtered—my death unknown, my murder unrevenged! These thoughts were maddening—my heart swelled, my brain burned—once more an arm touched mine. I looked fiercely up—no truculent face glared hatefully upon me; but eyes beaming with gentleness and compassion were turned in pity upon mine.

There was hope—there was heaven in that compassionate look! I would have spoken, but a warning glance restrained me. She placed a bowl of tea upon the table, desired me aloud to drink—then stooping until her lips almost touched my ear, whispered, "Courage; I shall be with you soon," departed as the ruffians had done, and I heard her lock and bar the hidden door.

I drank the tea—to me, so fevered, the beverage was most welcome. My heart beat faster—the blood flowed freely through my veins. I strove to calm my spirits down, and nerve myself to seize the first chance that fortune offered, no matter how desperate the odds were against succeeding.

I was not long alone,—the bar fell—the key grated in the lock—and a man, the taller one, came in. He stood over my bed, and examined my countenance attentively; but as he wore a mask, his face was entirely concealed. He laid the requisites for writing on the table, and then turning down the bed coverings, unlocked the manacle, and left my hands at liberty.

"Are you awake?" he said, in a deep disguised voice. I affected drowsiness as I replied, "Why, hardly—I am sleepy—my head is confused. Where am I?"

"That you will discover time enough. There," and he pointed to the table, "read that paper when you can, and obey its mandate if you would leave this place with life. I shall come here four hours hence"—and the scoundrel pulled out my own gold repeater, and marked the time with his finger on the dial—"see that what is ordered here"—and he touched a written paper—"be done." He raised the mattress, left me, and carefully secured the outlet.

How wearily time passes to the captive! The promised visitor did not return—an hour must have elapsed. Where was she? would she not come again? It was long past noon, for the sunbeams glanced obliquely through the grated casement. Another want was felt—hunger had succeeded sickness, and food would have been desirable. I heard a noise without,—the bolts were undone—the door unclosed—the unknown female entered with a tray, on which a plentiful repast was spread. She placed it on the table, and I required small persuasion to attack the viands stoutly.

"I must leave you for a few minutes," she said, "and ascertain how certain persons are employed below stairs. In that flask you will find brandy, in this water;—refresh your strength, renew your spirits—ere long both will be tried!"

She said, and left the apartment.

Who was this singular woman? At times I fancied I had heard the voice before; but, from the close bonnet she wore, I could discern nothing but that her eyes were dark and brilliant, and the general character of her face exceedingly handsome. Her absence was short—and when she returned, it was evident that I had attended to her advice, as fragments of food and a full glass of brandy and water testified.

"All is safe," she said; then turning suddenly round, she asked if I remembered her?—"Ah! no; hitherto the stupefying effects of that villanous mixture have confused me, and you are besides so closely muffled."

She laid aside her bonnet. Heavens! it was my old travelling acquaintance—the lady of the *soi-disant* colonel!

"Why did you not attend to my warning—I made several attempts to see and caution you—they failed; and as a last hope I addressed a hurried note to you. Did you receive it?"—"Yes," I replied.

"It was mysterious, certainly; but plain enough to put a prudent man upon his guard."

"Alas! I did not comprehend its import. Am I lost, lady? Is there a hope—a chance—or is all desperate?"—"The brave," she said, "only abandon hope with life. A chance of escape

remains, if you are reckless of danger, and will spill blood freely if nothing else will do."

"O that I had liberty and weapons, and neither heart or hand should fail!"—"Both shall be yours."

As she spoke, she produced a bunch of keys, applied a small one to the fetter-lock, and in a minute my limbs were free.

"Thanks, my kind preserver! Can you procure me weapons?"—"Here are your own;" and she unrolled a handkerchief and handed me a case of pistols. "These remained unnoticed in the pocket of your coat when the villains stripped you partially last night. I found and concealed them, until I could restore and you could use them."

My blood warmed—my heart felt lighter, when I grasped them. I examined the pistols hastily: the balls were safe—the flints and primings excellent.

"Now listen to me attentively."

"I will;—but first say, wherefore am I brought here," I inquired.—"To satisfy the cupidity of one scoundrel, and satiate the vengeance of another."

"Indeed I am not worth plundering. I parted with every note in my possession before I fell into those ruffian's hands."

"Look on that table; there is a paper that you are required to 'execute.'"

I took it up; it was a check upon Drummonds' for two thousand pounds. The villain must have known, when he ordered me to draw for so large a sum, that, on my return to England, I had removed the fortune of my mother from the funds and lodged it with my bankers.

"And if I did this act, would it insure my liberty?" was my remark.

"Would being plundered by one villain appease the deadly hatred of another, or Martelli's robbery satisfy Sedley's revenge? Remember all he owes you: you detected and exposed him;—and to you he attributes loss of character and caste—mistress—fortune—everything that was worth living for. No, no; your death in this den was determined on; nothing but your blood could glut his vengeance. Listen to me. There are now four ruffians in the house; they are engaged in packing up some valuable effects, with which they intend sailing from the river to-morrow morning. At nightfall two of them will convey these packages to the dwelling of a female accomplice called Annette: of her I know nothing, only that she is wife or mistress to your enemy. When they are gone our attempt must be made—we shall have but *two* to deal with. Overpower them, if possible, without loss of life—for, oh! there is too much blood upon my soul already;—but if surprise fails, either we or they must perish!"

"Enough!—I comprehend you perfectly. What am I to do in the mean time?"—"Write the check as you are directed—it will keep Martelli quiet until his companions leave the house."

"Will that be soon?"—"In two or three hours. Dinner is preparing;—that over, they will depart with the packages; and when the others are engaged drinking, you shall be set free. The rest depends on a bold heart and ready arm!"

"But what place is this?"

"A fitting den for murder! Mark you a broken cord fastened to the bottom of the lattice?"—"I do."

"Observe those marks upon the wall."

I looked at the place she pointed to—the plaster was scraped and broken.

"That rope terminated the earthly sufferings of the insane wretch who before you occupied this chamber, and the surface of the wall was indented during the convulsions of his last agonies."

I shuddered—a thrill of horror shot through me like an electric shock.

"I must leave you, or suspicion might arise. Be bold and ready—nothing else can save you and me! Martelli will visit you before dinner; and the next time you hear the key turn in the lock, you are free—if your own heart be stout, and fortune favours us. If either fail, in another hour both of us will be in eternity!"

"Fear me not—bring me some weapon to strike with."—"I will. And now to bed, lest any accident should lead the ruffians hither."

She left biscuits, with brandy and water—removed the remnant of my dinner—departed, and locked me in my prison.

When she was gone, I wrote the check—concealed the pistols beneath my pillow—replenished my tumbler—crept beneath the bed-coverings—and with all the calmness I could muster, waited for the moment of action, when the deepest cast of my game of life should be decided, and the result be freedom or death.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CATASTROPHE.

"To the massy door
A light step came—it paused—it moved once more;
Slow turns the grating bolt and sullen key:
'Tis as his heart foreboded—that fair she!
Whate'er her sins, to him a guardian saint,
And beauteous still as hermit's hope can paint;
Yet changed since last within the cell she came,
More pale her cheek, more tremulous her frame."

The Corsair.

"*First Murderer.* What, shall we stab him as he sleeps?

Second Murderer. No—he'll say 'twas done cowardly."

King Richard III.

EVENING came—the light shone dimly through the grating of my prison, and neither friend nor foe had broken for hours upon my solitude. Presently I heard a noise in the antechamber,—the bolt revolved—and Martelli, masked as usual, stood beside my bed. He looked at me, then turned to the table, took up the check, and examined it attentively.

"Is this the usual way in which you draw upon your banker?"—"It is."

"And this the precise form in which you write your name?"

I answered in the affirmative.

"Will this draft be duly honoured?"—"That question I cannot answer. I know there are funds of mine at Drummonds' greater than the amount of the check."

The ruffian looked heedfully at the paper, and then at me.

"I ask you, Captain Blake, if this draft be regularly filled up, and in the customary mode by which you withdraw money!"—"It is."

"And in form and signature there is nothing to beget suspicion?"—"I have already answered you."

The ruffian put the check into his pocket-book, and removed his mask, which he laid upon the table.

"Captain Blake," he said coolly, "there is no occasion that you and I should continue strangers to each other longer. You are welcome to examine my face. Before twenty hours I shall be on the sea, and you"—he made a momentary pause,—"no matter where. Now attend to me, and let us understand each other clearly. At ten to-morrow this check will be presented: if paid, well,—if not——" he stopped, and drew a short stiletto from his bosom,—"this dagger will be dyed in your heart's blood!"

"And would you murder an unoffending man,—a helpless and unarmed captive?"—"Ay, boy. This little weapon has searched many a breast before now: it has been often tried, and never failed its master."

My hand grasped the handle of a pistol, when I saw the glitter of the murderer's knife. I wished to shoot him dead; but prudence required me to be patient, and "bide my time," until a safer hour of vengeance came.

"Have you had food?" said the ruffian: "I perceive Marianne has left you some brandy to keep up your spirits."—"A fettered captive like me has but a sorry appetite."

"More fool you!" said the villain. "I have had ere now more iron on my carcase than you could stand under, and, damme! that was the time when I would have been most thankful for a decent dinner and a well-filled brandy bottle. Drink, man, while your throat is whole; before to-morrow night there might be a slit in it.—Talking of eating makes me hungry, and I'll to dinner. Adieu!—I wish you pleasant dreams till we meet; I shall be then two thousand richer, or you——" He paused—drew his hand across his neck—passed through the concealed door, and drew bolt and bar.

Cold and sanguinary monster! the *sangfroid* with which he pronounced my doom—the look with which he parted from me, steeled my heart—blood should flow; and, before long, Martelli and his confederate feel that their victim was not so powerless as they believed him.

While I was cooped up in this den of murder, Jack's elopement, and my extraordinary disappearance, had occasioned considerable surprise. But when noon came, and I had not yet returned, my continued absence began to occasion serious apprehensions for my safety. The waiter fortunately recollected the number of the coach in which, on the preceding night, I had taken my departure from the hotel, and, on inquiry, the driver was found, and informed Aylmer and O'Donnel that he had brought me back to town, and set me down upon the bridge. This information increased rather than allayed their fears; and they decided on proceeding to Clarges-street, and acquaint my grandfather. The old man was dreadfully alarmed; but from Emily everything was concealed, and my absence attributed to having accompanied my kinsman, until he was beyond the reach of pursuers, if there had been any such.

The recollection of the mysterious intimation of danger that the strange billet had contained, increased the cynic's apprehensions. He returned to Berners-street again; but there were no tidings of the lost one—no clue by which to trace me after I had been left on the bridge. Aylmer, in despair, was quitting my apartments, when, in carelessly turning over some notes and papers, the fictitious letter which brought me to the Lion, and delivered me into the hands of my implacable enemy, was found. It was now past four o'clock, and the cynic, accompanied by the little commander, drove directly to the Borough, and there he learned all that the good people themselves knew. I had been there—met strangers—persons altogether unknown to the landlord and his servants—and in an incredibly short time had become so much inebriated, as to be carried to a coach; but whither conveyed afterwards none could say. The mystic note—my sudden insensibility—all strengthened the cynic's fears, and he returned to Clarges-street, confirmed in his darkest suspicions, and persuaded that he should never see me a living man. Night was coming fast, and, after many and tedious efforts to discover the coach in which I had been abstracted from the Lion, my friends rejoined Mr. Harrison, sadder and not wiser men.

In my prison more than an hour had passed, and I paced its narrow confines impatiently. As night came, suspense grew agonizing, and I prayed anxiously for the moment when I should yield life up or achieve my liberty. The horrors of my situation became intolerable: at every sound my heart leaped—every minute I was more nervous and uncollected. The darkness added to the gloominess of my fancies,—I saw the wretched suicide suspended from the lattice, and struggling against the wall in parting agony. Was that the rustling of his feet? No, no—it was the turning of a key,—and Marianne stood beside me.

She carried a dark lantern, which she unclosed and laid upon the table, and then produced a short iron bar, evidently formed for a weapon of offence. It was, indeed, a murderous implement: I clutched it firmly in my right hand—and with a pistol in my left, and another disposed in my bosom, to permit me to draw it in a second, I told my deliverer that "I was ready."

"Stop,—we must not rush unadvisedly upon danger. I shall acquaint you with the *locale* of the room where our enemies are sitting. It opens from the hall below, and communicates with a deserted chamber by folding-doors, one of which has dropped from the upper hinge, and thus you will be enabled to see what passes in the other chamber. Martelli is a formidable enemy—him you shall attack, and I will prevent Sedley from assisting. Remember, they are well armed. Watch me!—when, as if by accident, I snuff one taper out, the moment that I relight it, spring on Martelli. Down with him!—if your blow fail, use your pistol promptly, or he will stab you!"

"Are the others gone?"

"Yes, some time before I ventured hither."

"How pale you look!" I said.

"Ay, and you tremble," returned Marianne.

"Mine is no coward fear: I long but for the moment of action. But, come, we both require a stimulus."

I half filled a wine-glass with brandy. How deadly pale that face, once, no doubt, beautiful, seemed by the sickly flare of the dark lantern.

She took the glass from my hand.

"I drink it," she said. "Up, heart! fail me not now. Drink, sir, it will serve you now."

I am not ashamed to own that my nerves required confirmation. Not that I admit I felt one spark of cowardice, for I had that knowledge of the certain death that awaited me, that would have driven the veriest dastard mad; but to descend the stairs calmly, and in a minute or two decide the toss-up on which the ruffians' lives and mine depended, required colder philosophy than any which I could summon.

"Are you ready?"—"Perfectly," I replied, with affected indifference.

"Follow me in silence, and when I lay my hand across your breast, stop—there is your position."—"I understand you."

"You know the signal?"—"Yes,—and it shall be promptly answered."

"Then, come, and may God and the blessed Lady assist us!"

She took the lantern from the table, and led the way into a large desolate ante-room. It was without furniture of any kind; and damp stains on the walls, and cobwebs clinging to the cornices, showed that for a long time it had been untenanted. My coat and boots were lying on the floor, where the ruffians had thrown them carelessly when they stripped them off to apply the manacles. Little did they then suppose, when they removed them, that they were but preparing me the better for action and surprise. We passed into a dark lobby, and descended a back staircase. My guide closed the lantern, took my hand, led me along a winding corridor into a spacious room. A half-closed folding-door admitted a stream of light, and from the inner chamber the voices of Sedley and his confederate were heard in earnest conversation. We reached the centre of the room, when the pistol I had deposited in my breast unfortunately fell upon the floor. The noise echoed through the unfurnished apartment, and we heard the ruffians leaping from their chairs.

"Who is there?" exclaimed both voices.—"I!" said the female, as she laid her hand across my breast, and rushed through the folding-doors.

"What the devil noise was that?" inquired Martelli.—"I dropped the lantern," replied the female.

"But what brought you through that room?"—"I came down the back stairs to look from the lobby window, as I heard the dog bark."

"Well—saw you anything without?"—"Nothing.—Lord! I'm so frightened at every noise! I would not live another week in this infernal place to be made queen of Britain. If ever house was haunted, this one is!"

"And there will be an additional ghost added to the party before to-morrow night," said the foreigner. "Come, pass the jug; that port is indifferent good wine, wherever Hensley made it out."

I had advanced a few steps during the conversation, and from my concealment could see distinctly everything that passed within. The room and the company would have afforded a fit study for the gloomiest pencil that was ever laid on canvas. The chamber was meanly and scantily furnished; the light of a brilliant wood fire and a pair of candles fell upon the harsh features of Sedley, while the countenance of his companion was partially in shade,—more truculent faces were never sketched by a painter. Drinking-glasses and a large jug were on the table, and in a corner of the room, and laid upon an old chest, a quantity of firearms and other weapons were deposited, and ready for instant use.

"Were you in the prisoner's room?" said Sedley to the female, who was engaged in placing fresh billets on the fire.—"Not I!" she answered testily; "I hate to go near it. I never look at the place the madman hanged himself in but I fancy that I see his face peeping through the grated window, black and convulsed as when the keeper cut him down."

"Pish!" said Martelli; "I have seen in my time many a strangled corpse."—"Ay, and helped to do the job too!" said Marianne, with some bitterness.

"Why, d—n it! how peevish you have grown of late? Well, if you must have the truth, I may have lent a hand before now."

"Is it difficult to choke a fellow?" inquired Sedley.—"Not if a man knows how to go about it. A thin line—such as makes a bell-pull or cords a trunk—that's the best gear. Do you intend to try your hand upon the chap upstairs? Is it not enough to half poison and whole rob him, but he must be slaughtered too?"

"Die he shall!" replied Sedley. "I would not quit England, even were my neck to stretch for it, until I feasted my eyes in gazing on his breathless body."

"You hate him cordially, no doubt?" said the female.—"I hate him more than all mankind put together."

"What is it for?—Supplanting you with the girl or the grandfather?" said Martelli, with a sneer.

"And could he expect that any woman would tolerate that scarecrow countenance?"—and Marianne looked scornfully at the short scoundrel, who returned her sarcasm with a menacing glance,—"or listen to his addresses for a moment, when that handsome lad upstairs was to be won?"

"Before many hours," replied Sedley, "I'll mar his wooing and spoil his beauty. Ay,"—and he pulled a paper from his pocket,—"and when he is stiff, I'll stick this upon his body, and with the same knife that stabbed him!"

"What paper is that?" Martelli inquired.—"His marriage licence. Ha! will not that be good revenge? I found it in the fool's pocket, when we were taking off his coat."

"And will you be executioner?" said the stouter ruffian.—"No," said the female, with a sneer; "he will only pin the paper on the corpse, and leave the stabbing part to you, or Hensley, or anybody who may happen to possess a man's heart and a man's arm."

"Now, by Heaven!" exclaimed the shorter villain, "I'll murder him before ten minutes."—"No, no, you won't. Remember, the handcuffs are off, and though his feet are fettered to the bed-post, he might knock you over with the bolster."

"Who dared to take the irons off?" said the ruffian angrily.—"I did," returned Martelli coolly.

"And wherefore?" Sedley asked.—"How the devil could he have written a banker's check, with his wrists manacled? Wait till he is asleep,"—and a sneer played over his features.

"Not I!" replied Sedley, with ferocity: "all I ask you to do, is to hold the light."—"And when your puny efforts fail, to use the stiletto afterwards," and Marianne laughed.

"Come, we'll prove that soon. Give us candles."—"Stop, let me snuff them first," and Marianne put forward her hand, but Martelli stayed her.

"Look you, Sedley; with your victim upstairs, I have nothing more to do, provided the check he gave be not dishonoured in the morning. I have no particular fancy for cutting throats—you may do the job if you please, and I'll stick to the jug."

"But can't you hold the light?"—"Why, no, except on one condition;—and if that be conceded, I will not only be candle-bearer, but, if you prove a bungler, as I think it likely you may, I will possibly give you some good advice and a little assistance."

"Name your condition."—"I have got here a tolerable watch,"—and the scoundrel drew mine from his pocket,—"but my finger looks bare without a ring; and that is a pretty diamond that sparkles upon yours."

"I understand you," replied Sedley; "the ring is yours."

Martelli extended his hand, while Sedley drew the jewel from his finger and presented it to his villainous confederate.

"Come, let us finish this jug first, and the job afterwards."—"Agreed;—but be speedy."

"And I will snuff the candles," said the female. She did so, and that before Martelli was extinguished.

The time was come—I drew in my breath until my bosom swelled—clutched the iron bar—wound myself up for action—and waited for the signal to spring on.

This was, indeed, the trying hour of a life—yet I was calm, ready, and collected. I watched Marianne move round the table to the place where the smaller ruffian sat. Martelli had raised the jug, while she stooped over Sedley's shoulder for an instant and applied the candle steadily to the blaze—lighted, and laid it on the table. I bounded through the folding doors—Martelli had scarcely time to look round, on hearing the noise behind him, before I smote him with my full force upon the head—and he rolled off the chair motionless, and to all appearance a dead man!

At the moment when I leaped from my hiding-place, Marianne cast her arms round Sedley's body, and though he made violent efforts to shake her off and reach a dirk, that we found in his bosom afterwards, she clung to him with amazing strength and resolution. They struggled across the room, as he dragged her to the chest on which the firearms were deposited. I rushed to her assistance as Sedley was catching at a pistol; but, from the closeness of Marianne's embrace, I could not deal a mortal blow without endangering my preserver. The villain's arm was extended to its full length, grasping at the weapon—I struck it with shattering force—a shriek of agony burst from the murderer, as the fractured arm dropped powerless to his side. Marianne's hold relaxed, and Sedley endeavoured to gain the door; but ere he attained it, a stunning blow marred escape, and stretched him on the floor beside his dead companion!

CHAPTER XVI.

ESCAPE.—SEIZURE OF A COACH.—RETURN TO TOWN.

"What mortal his own doom may guess?
Let none despond, let none despair!"
Mazeppa.

It was indeed a fearful and a sickening sight which the parlour of the ruffians' abode exhibited. Martelli and his confederate weltered on the floor, whose bare boards were moist with blood—while Marianne's dark hair, which had been dishevelled in the struggle, streamed loosely down her shoulders, as with a look, pallid and horror-stricken beyond description, she leaned against the mantel for support. I, with the implement of death in my grasp—my shirt-sleeves crimsoned from wrist to shoulder—stood over the fallen murderers. The desolate apartment—the flickering lights—the drinking glasses—the arms—all gave to the scene a wild and robber-like appearance; and so sudden was the attack, so rapid the catastrophe, that I felt as if the thing was still incomplete, and looked fiercely round to seek some other enemy on whom to prove my strength, and employ the murderous weapon I carried. But a moment recalled my wandering thoughts. I saw that Marianne was fainting—laid the weapons on the table, and hastened to her relief.

"Courage, my fair preserver—the fight is over, the business done."—"Not half," she feebly answered.

"Here, Marianne," and I held the wine-jug to her lips—"drink, and muster courage; if you sink, we both perish."—"I am better," she said; "mine is but a momentary weakness: and surely, in such a place, and with such a scene to meet the eye, it is excusable in a woman to quail?"

Where I had placed my arm round her for support, my shirt-sleeve had left a crimson stain, and I remarked it.

"That can be removed," she replied with a shudder. "Alas! there are blood-spots on my soul that Heaven's mercy alone can cleanse! But this is no time to listen to a woman's lament, or a sinner's confession. Up, sir, and be doing! Escape is now our first care—give me a light, and look sharply to those upon the floor; they are artful villains, and death may be only simulated—the snake 'scotched not killed.' I'll join you presently;" and seizing a taper, she hurried from the chamber.

I stood over the prostrate robbers:—these were the men who but five minutes since were rising from the table to despatch me—there they lay, soaking in their own blood, their victim the avenger! How long seemed Marianne's absence—she came at last—brought my coat and boots, a small bundle of feminine apparel, and the manacles which I had so lately worn. I comprehended her intention—took the fetters, and linked the ruffians to each other, and flung the key away.

"Ay," she muttered, "this makes all sure. Hasten, Captain Blake—take any weapon from yonder chest you fancy, and here is the one whose fall so nearly caused a premature discovery. Had it happened, we should have paid dearly for the accident. You see there was no lack of weapons there, and that powerless hand"—as she pointed to Martelli—"could use them well."

I selected a brace of pistols—belted them with a handkerchief to my waist—secured the iron mace that had done such good service, and desired Marianne to lead on.

"Not yet. Should the absent ruffians return before we are safe from pursuit, we must not leave them weapons to follow after us, and avenge their dead companions."

She collected the arms in her cloak, and left me once more—her absence was short.

"I have bestowed them safely," she said.

"Where?" I inquired.—"Where they will profit the finder little if he require them for present use; I threw them in the water-butt. Come on, sir; I have examined the mastiff's chain—he is secure."

"Now, Heaven direct us!" I ejaculated.—"Amen!" she responded solemnly. "We have to make out the road, for I am almost a stranger to it. Except one visit to the City in search of you, I have never been outside these walls since the night I was brought hither by him who lies at your feet."

"Was Martelli your husband, Marianne?"—"Hush! for God's sake; ask me nothing of him—nothing of myself, at present. Come on,—I trust we shall evade a meeting with the other villains."

"No matter; I am bravely armed."—"And think you that they are not equally prepared? Light the lantern, and follow me in silence."

"Marianne," I said, as a sudden recollection crossed my mind, "yonder scoundrel has stolen my watch."—"What matter! leave the bauble—minutes are worth all the watches upon earth to you and me."

"I would care nothing for its loss, Marianne, were it not a dear memorial of my father."—"Your father!" she half screamed, and rushing back she pulled it from the murderer's pocket, and presented it to me. The ring that was to repay his assisting in my death still glittered on Martelli's finger.

"Shall I remove this for you, Marianne?"—"No," she said indignantly; "let that ill-won jewel perish on the hand whose foul services it purchased! Hurry! we should be distant from this place ere now!"

We left the chamber of blood, and passed through the deserted hall. The door was secured, and it cost us some time to remove the numerous fastenings; and, cautiously as we left the house, the under-growl of the mastiff showed that our movements had not escaped his vigilance; but, owing to Marianne's foresight, the dog was unable to oppose our flight.

We closed the door, crossed a neglected garden, and followed a path that ran parallel with a high brick wall. The walk had once been gravelled, but it was in some places obstructed with rubbish, and overgrown with weeds and rank grass. It was skirted by full-grown evergreens, and at its termination we found a small wicket. I tried the door—it was locked; I examined the wall—it was too high for me to touch, and was topped with broken bottles. I might have scaled the fence, but to Marianne it was insurmountable, and nothing remained but to continue our researches, and find some breach or outlet by which we might escape.

While we held a brief consultation in cautious whispers, voices conversing in a low tone were heard, and footsteps approached the door. We fell back instantly, and sought concealment among the evergreens. We listened in breathless expectation—persons stopped before the wicket—a key was applied—the door opened—and, feeble as the light was, several figures were visible in the aperture. One of the party unclosed a lantern suddenly, and we saw three men enter the inclosure. I felt Marianne tremble like an aspen: if she fell or fainted, we were lost,—for a cough or sigh would, from our proximity to the intruders, betray us.

"Lock the door, Brown," said a gruff voice to the last of the party.—"No, no," observed the second fellow; "let Dick return to the bottom of the lane, and keep the coachman company. If he's left alone, he'll get frightened, and be off. He was d—d unwilling to wait, although I swore we would not be away five minutes."

The fellow declined obeying the order of his companion.

"What the devil!" he exclaimed, "am I to turn horseboy, because the fool's afraid? Not I, 'faith! let him stay there. I'll to the house, and get a glass of summut, for I'm blow'd if ever I needed it more."—"Well, lock the door, and move on."

We heard the bolt turned, and the key withdrawn.

"What are you about?" said the first ruffian. "Leave the key in the lock; it will go astray again, and we'll lose half an hour looking for it, as we did this evening."

The fellow replaced the key.

"Come, brush—let's to the house. The old chap and Sedley will be surprised when they must bundle off so quickly: three hours more would settle their accounts. Who the devil could have peached?"

"Move on," said the second. "Hold the light down—the place is so lumbered up with bricks and rubbish, that I nearly broke my leg last night."

Favoured by the stream of light which the retiring ruffians had thrown upon the path, I watched their progress towards the house, until they turned to cross the garden. This was the moment for escaping. I assisted my alarmed companion to leave the shrubbery where we had remained *perdus*—unlocked the wicket—stole into the lane—secured the door, and flung the key into an adjacent meadow. We found ourselves in a narrow avenue, inclosed on either side by palings, and a greensward beneath our feet. Were we going right? I paused a moment—but Marianne could not assist me. I was irresolute—a horse snorted at no great distance—we were right. "Come on," I whispered; "life and liberty are ours."

At the bottom of the alley the coach was visible. We approached it silently, and the grass on which we trod enabled me to surprise the driver. I desired my companion, in a whisper, to stop—stooped—moved on—seized the fellow by the throat—clapped a pistol to his breast, and, with a deep imprecation, declared that noise and resistance would insure instant death.

"What do you want?" the coachman muttered. "Silence and fidelity. Drive my companion and myself to London, safely and quickly; if you hesitate, I'll blow your brains out."

"I suppose I must obey you," he growled.—"Yes, if you value life at a pin's purchase."

"And am I to lose my night's work? I was promised two guineas by the people that took me off the stand."—"Obey me, and I'll give you five."

"Indeed! but am I sure of payment?"—"Certain, as of being shot without mercy, the moment you attempt to play me false."

"Come, then, I'm ready. There's no refusing a man with a pistol in his hand."—"And three in his belt, which he will use without compunction," I added.

He let fall the carriage steps.

"Marianne, we are waiting," I said softly.

My companion appeared and took her seat, and the driver held the door, expecting me to follow.

"Close it," I said; "you and I, my friend, must occupy the box until we reach the stones. Mount! and as you value money and a whole skin, drive your best."

He obeyed. —I placed myself beside him, and, quick as a narrow by-way and sudden turnings would permit, he drove for half an hour, until we reached one of the great outlets of the city, which he acquainted me was the Commercial Road.

"Pray, did you know the persons who employed you this evening?" I said to my companion.—"Not I, sir. They promised to pay me well, and I made no inquiries."

"And have you no suspicion who they were?" I rejoined.

The fellow winced.

"Come, answer me."—"Why, dang it! if I must tell truth, maybe I might give a good guess."

"Out with it!"—"Why, body-snatchers—going on the sly for a stiff-un!"

"Wherefore do you suppose so?"—"Why, for three good reasons:—first, from their look; second, the place they drove to; and third, because they came down so handsomely. Where am I to take you, sir?"

"To Berners Street. But stop; I may venture now to turn inside passenger."—"Yes, I guess in the heart of the City there is not much to fear."

I joined Marianne, and we proceeded at a round pace westward.

"Whither shall I conduct you?" I inquired, as I took my preserver's hand. "Will you come to my hotel, and remain there in safety until suitable apartments can be obtained for you in the morning?"

"No, I will not burden you with farther care. I have an old acquaintance whose residence is not distant, and will stop there to-night. Will you visit me to-morrow, when I am sufficiently collected to converse?" — "All you desire, Marianne, shall be done."

"Tell him to drive to the Adelphi."

I pulled the check-string—named the street and number—and we proceeded.

"We are in the Strand," she said, looking from the window, "and I shall soon be at my destination. You promise, then, to call upon me in the morning?"—"I will indeed, and shall be very anxious to see you."

"And when you know me better!——O God, what a fate has mine been!"

She sobbed convulsively, and I strove to soothe her—took her hand gently in mine, and placed my arm round her. She shuddered and shrank from me.

"No—no," she muttered; "the arm that once encircled me is cold for ever. I know that yours is the touch of compassion; but even that brings recollections that are maddening."

She alluded probably to Martelli's death, and I respected her feelings too much to wound them by inquiries.

We stopped—the driver knocked at the door, and, at Marianne's request, announced her by a name I had never heard before. Presently an elderly woman came to the steps, and received her with respect and kindness. I bade her good night, and turned the horses' heads to Berners Street.

St. Martin's clock was striking nine as we passed by, and in a few minutes I was set down at my hotel.

The porter started as I crossed the hall, and before I gained the drawing-room I heard my name repeated by several voices, in tones which told that my return had caused a strong sensation. William directly appeared with lights—he looked at me and exclaimed, "Good God! Captain Blake, what has happened?"—"Happened, William?"

I turned my eyes to the pier glass. Heavens, what a figure! I might have passed for a bandit or a madman. Pistols belted round my waist—my neck bare—my coat torn, and face and shirt spotted with gouts of blood.

"Hush, William—be silent. Bring water to my room, and send the coachman up."

He bowed—left me—and the driver tapped and was admitted.

I unlocked my writing-case, and handed him a five-pound note. He examined it—looked at me suspiciously and scratched his head.

"What does the fellow stare at?" I asked.—"'Faith, sir," replied Jehu, "I hardly know whether I should fob the money. Maybe you intend to pull me up? I won't have it; give me what fare you please."

I smiled. "I mean you no harm, my good fellow. Put the money in your pocket. Five pounds may appear to you an extravagant fare; but I would not have wanted your services this night for five hundred. Take it, come here to-morrow at eleven, and you shall earn an additional guinea."—"Never fear, sir. I beg your honour's pardon for suspecting you; but, fecks, I never found the muzzle of a pistol so near my ribs afore—and no wonder that I have felt queerish since it. I'll attend ye in the morning at eleven, and no mistake."

He shuffled his feet, made a low bow and his exit.

Before William's return, I had disencumbered myself of every thing that bore evidence of the scenes in which I had been so recently engaged, —heard from the attendant how anxiously my friends had inquired for me,—and having made a hasty toilet, set off for Clarges Street.

At my grandfather's a cabinet council was assembled in the drawing-room, for my continued absence had occasioned the gloomiest anticipations—Emily had retired in tears to her own room—Mr. Harrison was inconsolable—the cynic in despair—and the little colonel himself beginning to despond. Emily had been infected by the general panic, although still ignorant of my

mysterious disappearance; but from Jack's rashness and *mal adresse*, she feared that I was a party in some unpleasant adventure, if not entangled in a more serious scrape.

"What, Mr. Aylmer, can be done?" the old gentleman inquired despondingly, after numerous projects had been mooted and rejected.—"I know not," replied the cynic, "but make instant application to the head office, and let the police——"

"I hate employing them," said the little colonel, his ruling passion awakened by the name; "they interrupt people in settling honourable dif——"

The old man's temper gave way—a jobation was on his lips, when the knocker pealed—the bell rang—and the street-door opened. Who could the hasty messenger be? Aylmer sprang up to ascertain; but a quicker ear had caught the sound—a lighter foot anticipated his movements—and when he reached the hall, Emily was locked in my arms, and sobbing on my breast.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HAUNT OF VILLAINY BY DAYLIGHT.—ANOTHER CAPTURE.

"*Poins.* Pray God you have not murdered some of them.

Fal. Nay, that's past praying for: I have peppered two."

Henry IV.

NEVER was a man, when relating a tale of "most disastrous chances," listened to with deeper sympathy and attention than I; and yet it was singular to observe how very differently my auditors were affected. My grandfather's horror at this miraculous escape from assassination was mingled with deep distress at the exposed villainy of his perfidious ward. The cynic's face, at times, almost displayed a feeling of incredulity,—at others, terror and astonishment. When I described the moment of attack, and the short but sanguinary affair that followed in the ruffians' parlour, O'Donnel's flashing eyes told the portion of "moving accidents" that interested him most. But Emily, with pale cheeks and "lips apart," heard me in silent wonder, and—

"My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs."

"What course is to be pursued, gentlemen?" said Mr. Harrison. "Alas! that the child of him I loved with brotherly regard should have met such untimely end! There is no hope for him. Had he escaped his merited doom, he would most probably have been betrayed and apprehended—and, in that case, an ignominious death have ended a life of sin and shame. What should be done?"

"Drive without delay to the villains' haunt, and exterminate them without mercy, root and branch," exclaimed the short commander.

"No," said the cynic; "a discovery would serve no good purpose, and only wound anew the feelings of our revered friend. Let an *exposé*, if possible, be avoided. If the ruffians have perished by the hand of their intended victim, unless a necessity—which at present does not exist—should render a disclosure of the affair unavoidable, let their death remain a mystery. That they are dead, is but uncertain: they were promptly succoured by their confederates, and probably removed to a safe retreat, or carried on board the vessel which, it appears, was in readiness to convey them from the country. You have nothing to dread from them again. Let us, therefore, remain quiet till to-morrow—then visit the place, and ascertain the ruffians' fate. Indeed, we have no alternative—for I suspect, without the assistance of the coachman, we should find it difficult to make out the scene of the late affray."

Aylmer was correct. I was unacquainted with the environs of the City, and consequently would have been a sorry guide to a place selected for concealment, no doubt, from its remote and isolated situation.

From the mental anxiety and bodily fatigue I had so recently undergone, my grandfather and Emily insisted on my retiring early to my hotel. I departed accordingly with my friends—supped at Long's—had a free carouse—and separated with an engagement to meet in Berners-street at breakfast, and a promise to accompany me to the ruffian abode that for a time had been my prison, and nearly proved a grave.

To assert that mine were unbroken slumbers, would be absurd. My dreams were "troublous," certainly; but yet I was far more composed than I could have expected to be, after the fearful scenes I had encountered. Men sleep during periods of distressing excitement—felons rest calmly the night before they suffer—Indians, in the interval of torture, have slumbered at the stake; with me, "sleep fell soft on the hardest bed;" and I never remember to have enjoyed a deeper repose than when I stretched myself beneath a walnut-tree after the fight of Quatre Bras,—or, harassed and hungry, when we retreated on Mount St. Jean, I couched in my cloak on a sward of wet rye, the night before the field of Waterloo.

My friends were punctual; and before our *déjêuné* was ended, the coachman proved himself "the discreetest of whips," and came lumbering to the door with his "leathern conveniency."

Although we had no reason to suppose that any of the worthy fraternity would still infest the premises, we took care to go prepared for action; and having given honest Jehu his instructions, drove through the City, and proceeded to the murderers' den.

We had travelled more than a mile beyond the stones, before we diverged from the great thoroughfare into a narrow byroad. Two or three turnings involved us completely in the fields—a lane, scarcely broad enough in some places for the carriage to pass over in safety, was traversed next. I fancied that I had some remembrance of the locality, and I was right. The driver pulled up in a few minutes—pointed to a green alley, which I clearly recollected—and told me we were at the place where, on the preceding night, I had so very unceremoniously taken forcible possession of his vehicle and person.

It was, indeed, a solitary spot, to be so near the metropolis of England, and within hearing of St. Paul's clock. After directing our charioteer to wait, I led the way, and, at some fifty paces up the alley, turned into the field, and commenced researches through the grass. I succeeded, and found the iron bar I had thrown away in my retreat, when I thought a more portable weapon

would serve my purpose better. It was in truth a murderous implement, and forged only for an assassin. The striking part was triangular—and to one of its edges, clotted in blood, a grizzled lock adhered. The hair was Martelli's—and little doubt remained but we should find him a corpse.

The short commander examined the weapon with all the precision of a connoisseur.

"'Pon my life!" he exclaimed, "an excellent tool in a *mêlée*, where everything, like a fox-chase, should be short, sharp, and decisive;—the handle judiciously protected with a lapping of whipcord, and a becket, as sailors call it, to secure it to the wrist. We'll take it with us as part of the '*opima spolia*;'" and he laid it carefully aside, while we proceeded to the wicket.

Our suspicions were correct—the parties had absconded—for the door was ajar, and we gained an easy and undisputed entrance.

If at night the garden had appeared neglected, by day its desolation was far more remarkable. The walk that led to the mansion was choked with weeds and portions of the wall, which in many places had given way. The shrubs—and some of them rare exotics,—were trodden down and withering. The whole look of the place was melancholy and forlorn—and the marvel was how such ruin and abandonment could be found in the immediate vicinity of a great and wealthy city. At the termination of the walk, we halted in front of my late prison,—and a gloomier mansion could have never been imagined by a writer of romance.

It was a large brick building of three stories, with square pilasters of discoloured freestone. Its antiquity was evident, from the heavy framework of the windows and the form and altitude of the chimneys. Falling rapidly to decay, the roof exhibited sundry breaches; while many of the casements were built up, and others wholly destitute of glass. The remains of a conservatory were distinct—and the garden, stocked with the commonest vegetables, told that it had fallen into the meanest hands. Everywhere there were marks of desertion—some of the offices were down—the porter's lodge almost in ruins—and from the huge crop of dank grass that clung to the iron lattice-work of the gates, it was quite apparent that for years they had not revolved upon their rusted hinges.

The back of the premises displayed still greater devastation: the stables were roofless—the coach-house fallen. While my companions were moving through the ruins, I was observing other matters. The watch-dog was gone—and the firearms that Marianne had carried off, lay in the water-butt, where she had last night thrown them.

One window in the rear of the mansion struck my companions as being remarkable. It had originally been of large size, but was now built up nearly to the top—and small as the remaining aperture was, it was secured by a strong grating of iron bars.

I recognized it at once.

"That," I said, pointing it out to Aylmer—"that was my prison."

"Ay, it has a villainous look, certainly. Come on—let us explore the interior. We have nothing to fear, with daylight, loaded pistols, two heroes, and one coward,—meaning myself; and in case of a retreat, if I be driven to the wall I may turn desperate, and prove the best man of the three."—"*Nous verrons.* We'll try this door."

We did, and unsuccessfully, for it was secured within.

"Let us assault the front," said the little colonel; "surely, where you could manage to get out, we shall be certain to get in."

We found the hall-door locked, and just as Marianne had left it; but a lower window was not entirely closed. I approached to raise it—a slight noise within attracted my attention. I listened—groans, or something like them, were audible. O'Donnel and the cynic bent their ears—and smothered sounds, such as proceed from persons in extremity, were heard distinctly. What was to be done?—Break in and relieve the wretch, whether it proved Sedley or Martelli.

We raised the sash, and I forced my way through. I opened the shutters cautiously, and the light streamed in. No murderer was there;—but on the floor, handcuffed, bound to the table, and with a piece of wood secured across his mouth, which prevented him from uttering any but the low and inarticulate moanings that alarmed us, lay an old man, whose snowy beard and withered features announced him to have nearly reached the longest span of mortal existence. For a few minutes after we released the captive—he was unable to speak; but gradually he recovered. We removed the apprehensions under which he was labouring on finding himself surrounded by strangers, and by degrees gathered the information I required. I was not, as I had feared, a homicide; and neither of the villains had perished by my hand.

The old man's story was a simple one. We connected a narrative rather wandering and diffuse, and learned the following particulars:—

This deserted house had once been the favourite residence of a gentleman who had amassed a large fortune in the East. On his return to England, although advanced in years, he married—and a son and daughter blessed the union. Their mother died—consequently the cares of infancy devolved upon the widower, and every hope of the retired merchant centred in the orphan children.

They grew up;—the girl was handsome, and the boy exhibited precocious indications of splendid talents. But, alas! both evinced a nervous sensibility truly alarming—for insanity was an hereditary disease, and consequently the adoring parent was rendered miserable from well-grounded apprehension.

Years passed over;—the girl became a woman, and the boy graduated honourably in Oxford. Still the anxious father watched them attentively—and as a frequent change of scene was recommended by the family physician, he resolved to pass the autumn at a fashionable watering-place, and accordingly took up his abode at Sidmouth.

Here, of course, he mixed more generally with the world; and his daughter became acquainted with an Irish officer, whose wounds had obliged him to leave the Peninsula for a time. She loved him—and it was not unobserved. It ended in a proposal; and he was accepted by the girl, and rejected by her father. An immediate removal from Sidmouth followed; but it was too late—the mischief was done—her constitutional nervousness was unduly excited—lunacy supervened—and in a moment of despondency she ended

being! The body was found in a pond, since filled up: and from the precautions taken by the unfortunate girl to prevent her dress being displaced, it was too evident that the act was premeditated.

A year passed, and time was abating the merchant's sufferings. Alas! his heart was to be lacerated anew. His son—his only hope—from what cause we did not ascertain, showed symptoms of decided insanity. Every care was taken by the wretched parent to prevent the recurrence of a similar misfortune; and, under the direction of the King's physician, the room that became my prison was prepared for the safe restraint of the unfortunate patient. From the precautions used, it was believed that the poor youth could do himself no bodily injury. These hopes were vain; for during the temporary absence of his keeper, he contrived to crawl, fettered as he was, to the window,—and when the man returned, the maniac was a corpse, suspended by the slight cord that was used to raise the sash and ventilate the chamber.

The sad scene that had witnessed a double suicide was abandoned by the wretched father—the house stripped of furniture, and permitted to fall to decay, for the owner determined never to inhabit it again. To the uses of a worn-out domestic the gardens were appropriated; and, from the unusual solitude of this isolated spot, it was hired by the ruffians as a secure retreat from the myrmidons of the law, and a safe depository for plunder. The old domestic thought it desirable to obtain tenants for the forsaken mansion, and, stimulated by the promise of a trifling rent, he admitted without suspicion the dangerous occupants, who abridged his own liberty, and, but for a chapter of accidents, would have consigned me to the tomb of the Capulets.

It appeared upon further inquiry, that, disturbed by the carriage of some trunks to a van which the ruffians had drawn up beside a breach in the wall and contiguous to the ruinous gate-house, the old man had rashly intruded on them, while in the act of removing their disabled companions. Martelli, from his report, was nearly dead; while Sedley complained of nothing but a fractured arm. The interruption would have been fatal to the ancient horticulturist, had not one of the gang, less truculent than the rest, refused to look on, when one so old and helpless should be slaughtered. It was, however, necessary for the general safety, that the intruder should be secured, and the manacles that I had worn, and made others wear, were now transferred to him; and thus, in one brief day, the same fetters compressed the limbs of youth, middle age, and senility.

We had now learned all we wanted, and all we wished to know. The scoundrels were on their passage to another land, and I, to my own great satisfaction, had escaped doing the office of the executioner. Our visit to the deserted house had been attended with another cause for congratulation—for timely succour had rescued the old gardener, who otherwise must undoubtedly have perished.

I turned from the haunt of villainy, and strove to forget the recent scenes I had gone through. A brilliant future was shadowed out—the brightest dreams of happiness were to be realised. The thunder cloud had rolled by—the bolt had missed me; and if the perils I escaped caused me a passing shudder, I had the rapturous prospect to contemplate where beauty and fortune should be mine.

My friends left me at the corner of Norfolk Street, for it was just the time I had named for visiting Marianne. I was admitted—introduced to a neat and well-furnished parlour—and sent up my card. The maid servant was absent a few minutes, and returned with a pencilled note—

"I am far too ill to see you for a few days. Judge not of my nerves by past events. I am astonished when I think on what I have undergone, and wonder at my own *hardiesse*—or rather call it desperation. When calmer, I will see you—I wish to speak to you—I must have a brief and private interview. Have you heard anything of those wretched men?—and what?"

I told her in a few lines the result of our morning visit to the deserted house, and despatched the billet by the maid. A short time brought me a reply:—

"Thank God! a load is taken off my heart. Too much blood has flowed for me. Your intelligence rejoices me—and I shall know what I have not known for months—a day of peace. Leave your address, and you shall hear of me occasionally, until I am able to receive you.—Farewell."

I returned a short note, asking whether in the mean time there was anything in which I could be serviceable, and delicately inquired how her finances stood. An immediate reply thanked me for my kindness, and assured me that if pecuniary or other assistance were required, there was no one in England to whom she would apply but me.

I gave my address to the servant—left Norfolk Street—and hastened to my grandfather's to apprise him of the occurrences of the morning, and pay my duty to my affianced bride.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LETTERS TOUCHING LOVE, LAW, AND BUSINESS.

"There 's a letter for you, sir."

Hamlet.

"*Shall.* Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pounds?

Evans. Seven hundred pounds, and possibilities is good gifts."

Merry Wives of Windsor.

GREAT was the satisfaction of the old gentleman at the intelligence I brought. His feelings would be spared of having the delinquencies of his ruffian ward exposed—associated painfully as the affair was with so many unfortunate recollections of his good and valued friend, the father of the worthless outcast. I found his steward had arrived from the country to receive necessary directions for preparing Stainsbury Park for the reception of Emily and me; and as Mr. Harrison would have sufficient occupation for the morning, I sent for Jack's phaeton, and took out my affianced bride.

In the course of the forenoon we called on the coachmaker in Long Acre—visited Howell and James,—with divers dressmakers, jewellers, and tradespeople, whose services are indispensable when hymeneals are impending; and finished our drive by an excursion to the picture gallery at

Dulwich. At four o'clock we returned to Clarges Street; and my duty to my mistress being done, I devoted the next hour to the affairs of my kinsman.

It is unnecessary to say that Jack's northern expedition was faithfully chronicled in every print, morning and evening, within the bills of mortality. Much was said of the beauty of the bride,—much also of fortune in her own right, besides her large expectancies. One paper averred that the Director was inexorable; and another that he was yearning to embrace the fugitives. From the accuracy of description in which the *Morning Post* indulged, there must have been a special reporter with a stop-watch upon the box, for the change of horses at York and Carlisle were marked to a second, and the overturning of a travelling showman most minutely described, although, as it afterwards appeared, the whole account was apocryphal.

Among the parting injunctions delivered to me on the memorable night of his elopement by Jack the Devil, I was implored by every kindred tie to receive his letters, examine their contents, and give every communication which was important a prompt and suitable reply. My own affairs, unfortunately, had been too hurried and momentous to allow me any leisure to attend to the business of Jack's *bureau*. On my return with Emily from Dulwich, I recollected, for the first time, having been nominated honorary secretary to my absent kinsman; and, strolling down to Long's, I found there a voluminous correspondence.

It was, indeed, a curious literary medley which it was my duty to overlook. The first seals I broke were from a tailor and an attorney. The tailor requested the honour of Jack's custom; the attorney demanded a settlement of account, or regretted that he must take proceedings against him without delay.

The remainder of the correspondence was as desultory. A horse-dealer recommended him a bay mare. A reduced gentleman begged to be accommodated with the loan of a guinea. There was a threatening letter from an angry brother, whom it pleased to remain anonymous, for winking at his sister in the park; and a billet from a broken-down actress, hoping he would take a box at her benefit. All these I consigned to the drawers of my dressing-table; but two epistles, of more imposing character, I read with deep attention. One bore the Brighton postmark, and was from a lady; the address upon the other was in the well-remembered handwriting of my uncle Manus. Of course, gallantry obliged me to give precedence to the former.

The penmanship was very unpretending, and "Sarah Ann Jac'son," as the fair writer subscribed herself, differed in orthography from most of the grammarians. But her letter threw a new light upon the variety of Jack the Devil's avocations—and for the first time, and to my unspeakable surprise, I learned that my kinsman was deeply engaged in the tobacco trade! The letter ran thus:—

"O, you crewel man to lave me in such a predikiment—two mons over, and not the scrape of a pen. Trade all gone—and no money to be got no how—and I that don a snug bisness with most of the Dragoons, h'ant for God knows how long, suplyd them with a pipeful.—You'l wondir when I tell you so—But its all trew I asure ye—When the Lancirs got the rout, in coms the Huzards—and what did the doo, but brings down an old lady from Lonon, and sets hir and hir too darters up in the hoposition line rite opasite my door—Well, sinse then, hir shop nevir empys of them—There they are mornin, noon, and night—and no call for me—I cant stand it no longer—rents high and reats heavy—and old Jones swears he woudn't trust us with un ouns of grass-cut, because you did not pay the last parcel as came down."

Here was a discovery! Jack a dealer and chapman—a vendor of snuff, and a retailer of nigger-head! It was probably a co-partnership—"Blake and Jackson" above the door—and within, "Goods payable on delivery," and "No connection with the shop over the way." Heavens! if the old Director was aware of his son-in-law's turn for trade, how much the knowledge would delight him! Or it might be only a sleeping partnership. Ah! that was more probable.

The epistle proceeded to say that, from the decline of business, Miss Jackson would wave her objections to visiting Ireland, although she admitted "she felt queerish at laving her dear relashins"—and had also a lively horror of "them men with White feet, wot goes about tossin people on hot pitch-forks." There was a passing allusion to what she termed "a plege of affection"—and a jeremiade touching the loss of a "bloo silk pelise, that had cost her three and ten a yard." The conclusion was particularly endearing—she was "his till deth." As customary in feminine epistles, however, the pith lay in the postscript; and there was a nota-bene requesting my kinsman to "wright soon, and not forget a small remitence."

The letter of my uncle Manus was characteristic of the man—straightforward, honest, and unsophisticated.

"Castle Blake, April 23rd.

"DEAR JACK,—I have so much to tell you, that I don't know which end to begin with. But I had better tell you of my affair with the coroner, before I come to the death of Mrs. Casey, whom, glory be to God! we interred comfortably last night beside her mother, your grandaunt, in the Abbey of Ballintubber.

"Well, as to Clancy's business. It was last Monday week—Father Walsh was reading mass to your mother and the maids, and I was looking at Tony washing Kate Karney's eye with extract of goulard—she is a most unlucky mare, for only the week before she was all but drowned in a marl-hole.—Well, down ran the gate-keeper's wife, as if the devil was at her heels, to say that the coroner was coming, and a whole regiment along with him. Of course we shut the doors; and in a few minutes the soldiers appeared at the head of the avenue, and Clancy, the thief of the world, riding before them on the grey pony. Sibby Philbin, the poor creature, thought all the army in the province was there; though after all there was only the light company of the 87th, commanded by a Captain Hamilton, a bosom friend of your cousin John. The soldiers came fair and easy down the road; your mother and the priest remained at prayers, as they ought to do; and I loaded the old double with a handful of swan-drops, and sat down at

the lobby window, to see how things would get on.

"When the red-coats came to the carriage sweep, Captain Hamilton halted the company, and ordered arms. Clancy dismounted—pulled out an ugly bit of parchment—walked up the steps as if the house was his own—and mighty stiff he was as he gave a thundering knock at the door, that set all the dogs a-barking.

"'Arrah, what do you want?' says I from the window—'that you knock like a blacksmith.'—'I want admission,' says he.

"'I'm greatly afraid you're not likely to get it,' replied I.—'You had better give it fair and peaceably,' says he.

"'You're safer where you are,' says I, 'and on the right side to run away.'—'I'll smash the door in a jiffey,' said he.

"'Then, upon my conscience, you'll never smash another,' says I; and I lifted the gun quietly, and opened both pans to see that the primings were good. Clancy stepped back—the soldiers laughed heartily—for the tenants had got the alarm, and came hopping in dozens over the park walls; and in less than no time, there they were like a swarm of bees, and every man a shillelagh in his fist, and the girls with their aprons full of paving-stones.

"Well, Clancy got mortally afraid. 'I hold you, sir,' says he to Captain Hamilton, 'accountable for my safety—and I command you to break in the door.'—'I'd see you d——d first,' replied the captain: 'I came here to protect you, certainly; but do you think, you scoundrel, that I am obliged to commit a burglary?'

"'I want you to do your duty,' says the coroner.—'And that I will,' says the captain. 'I'll bring you safe home if you please it; but do you suppose that I will turn housebreaker?'

"The tenants gave a cheer—the soldiers a laugh—and Clancy ran into the ranks for protection.

"You may guess that Denis O'Brien had not been idle. He played the old soldier, and rolled a barrel of beer and a keg of poteen round to the front of the house. I requested the captain to refresh his men, as they had had a long walk from Loughrea; but he shook his head, and pointed to the tenants. 'Phew!' says Denis O'Brien; 'I'll settle that in the snapping of a flint,' and in he goes for Father James; and before you could bless yourself, the priest removed them, man, woman, and child, to the Dane's Fort; and there they sat perched upon the top, like a flock of crows in a stubble field.

"You never saw decenter poor fellows than the military. When the tenants disappeared, the captain ordered to pile arms and refresh themselves. Every man of them drank my health, and the colour-sergeant added, 'More power to my elbow.' Clancy would have given his grey pony—and he's a clever cob—to have been safe at home; when, lo! the park gates opened, and down galloped the postmaster's son as if the devil—Heaven pardon us!—was behind him.

"'Arrah—Corney dear—what a hurry you are in,' says Denis O'Brien, who was mixing a glass of grog for an old corporal. 'Ballagh!'* says he; and he tilted through the soldiers, who very good-naturedly made way for him to pass.—'It's I that has the beautiful news,' says he; 'there's a letter for you, ye dirty divil!' and he threw one to Clancy, 'and here's another for his honour, if any of ye were long enough to hand it to him.' Instantly a soldier fixed his bayonet—stuck the despatch upon the point—jumped upon the balustrade, and conveyed it safely to my hand.

"I broke it hastily—it was a few lines from Mrs. Casey's confessor, begging me to hurry up—and, for the tender mercies, to make no delay, if I would catch my cousin alive. She left me, it appeared, every thing she possessed, and wanted to add her blessing to the bargain.

"The coroner's intelligence was conclusive; he demanded a parley, and begged to be admitted 'upon honour.' 'All,' he said, 'was fortunately arranged,' and Sharpe and Sweepall desired him to surcease hostile proceedings immediately.

"'Am I to believe you, Clancy?' says I, 'or is this a stratagem on your part?'—'If it is,' says he, 'let Captain Hamilton draw off, and lave me to the tender mercy of the tenants.'

"This was enough: the doors were opened, and in came the captain, his officers, and Mr. Clancy.

"Well, all ended as it ought; the coroner and I were reconciled; and I started by the Galway mail that night for Dublin—stopped at 'The Hibernian,' and when I had made myself decent, set off for Merrion Square.

"I found all there expecting my arrival, and was shown up directly to poor Honor's bedroom. There she lay with the apothecary at her side, propped with a dozen pillows, and blowing—glory be to God!—like a regular roarer after a sudden burst.

"'Honor,' says I, 'I'm sorry to see you so bad.'—'Och! Manus *astore;* it's I that am glad to see you!' replied she: 'my time's short in this world, and I'd like to plaister up any little difference between us.'

"'Honor, have you made your soul yet?' for you know, Jack, one should think at these times of religion.—'I have, *agra,*' says she; 'I confessed this morning to Father Shanaghan, and have left fifty pound for masses for myself, and ten for poor dear Jerry Casey, though he's in glory long ago. I'm in a blessed state of mind, Manus,' says she; 'and on my dying bed, I'd take the vestment, it was bad members that put between us—my curse attend them for the same!'—I thought she would have gone off in a passion, for she was always good game.

"'Amen!—Honor,' says I. 'Bad luck to them every day they see a paving-stone, and every day they don't.'—'Ay; but for these thieves, Manus, you and I would have lived and died together.'

"'It's the attorneys you mean,' says I. 'Don't fret, Honor. You may remember that Jack flogged Sharpe; and if it will ease your last moments, I'll break Sweepall's bones within an hour.'—'Och! the widow's curse upon both!' says she; 'but don't mind them, Manus dear, as I'm dying in peace and charity with all mankind.'

"Well, Jack, after consigning her cats and canaries to your mother's care, settling ten pounds a year upon the parrot, and sending her love to you—poor Honor Casey went off like a

* Anglicé—The Road.

decent woman, and a good Catholic. Of course, we gave her a good wake, as she deserved; and a finer funeral never entered Ballintubber. After leaving some small annuities to Jerry's poor relations, all she died possessed of is bequeathed to me, in trust to clear off incumbrances—and the surplus to be invested in purchasing lands, to be entailed with the Castle Blake property on the heirs male for ever.

"Come over, Jack, as soon as possible. The Duhallow hounds are to be disposed of; and with a cross of our own and the Roxborough blood—for Tony managed, one way or other, to quarter eleven couple among the tenants—with the blessing of God, we'll have as sweet a pack as ever drew a cover, and all ready for work before cub-hunting commences next season.

"While they were laying Honor out, I slipped down to Dycer's, as it was sale-day, and was just in time to buy Rasper and Medora. You know the horse; he was poor Mick Brown's favourite, he that was shot by the *whitefeet*, and be d—d to them!—and the mare won the Portumna cup, a four-year-old, beating Hawk, Timekeeper, and Tom Payne. I gave a long price for them; but no matter—we're at the sunny side of the hedge now, and that's a comfort.

"Of course Mrs. Casey's death occasioned great pleasure to all our connection. Tony has never been sober since, and Denis O'Brien was obliged to book himself for a twelvemonth against everything but beer, and whatever spirits he gets out of your mother's hand. Mary Macan, the girl with the black eyes, that you sent the cloak and bonnet to from Dublin, has gone for change of air to her aunt's in Roscommon. The devils in the neighbourhood wanted to make out some story about you; but your mother very properly wouldn't listen to them; for she says she never knew her, from the time she entered the house, to break Lent or miss mass.

"Bring over two or three good saddles from Whippy—Rasper will require a cut-down pommel, and a wide tree. Of course you'll go into mourning—it will be decent, although you never could abide poor Honor. Get me a bust of Sir Francis; they are to be had at some place near Pall Mall. There's not a man in England I admire so much. Your mother sends her love to you and John. Tell him I'll write to him, and hope to see him soon here;—the oftener he comes, and the longer he stays, the better. Medora would carry him beautifully—she's master of his weight with any dogs that ever ran before their own tails.

"Your affectionate father,

"MANUS BLAKE.

"P.S.—I was greatly relieved by your last letter, as, from the similarity of rank and name, I was afraid, at first, that you might have been the person to whom such frequent allusion was made in the newspapers. Blessed be God! that dancing vagabond has left the country; and poor John intends, you say, to turn a new leaf. You remember the scrape he got into with Miss Lightbody; I hoped that affair would have been a warning to him. I suppose he has melted all his money, and old *Square-toes* won't give him a rap.—Well, no matter, there's plenty for us all; and as long as we have any, he shall never want. I wish you would inquire at the Horse-Guards, and see if we could purchase him on. If he was once a colonel I would be satisfied.—I was greatly pleased with his behaviour in those fields—what a pity he did not raise his hand an inch or two! But to level low is the right side to err upon—a neater shot than your uncle Pat never touched a trigger, and I never knew him rise over the hipbone but once, and that was when he shot Dick Birmingham at the Tuam Election.—You should advise your cousin Jack—he is a fine honest-hearted fellow. Tell him the danger of knowing devils like those opera-women—the curse of Cromwell light upon them one and all! Your poor mother vowed a station to Ball, when she heard that you had no acquaintance with that foreigner, and that it was John that drilled that Newman or Neville at Dulwich. I'll send you an order on Coutts next post. God bless you!

"Yours, M. B."

Wonderful was the fortune that attended the name of Blake! Our star was in the ascendant, and evil influences were overcome. Wealth flowed on us in a steady stream; and even Jack's *diablerie* could not mar the efforts of our better genius. A chance of inheriting from Honor Casey was yesterday as unpromising to my uncle, as ten years since my succeeding to the estates of Stainsbury.—Yet Plutus was not more beneficent than Hymen; for into the lottery of love my cousin and myself had boldly ventured, and both drawn prizes.

CHAPTER XIX.

EMBASSY TO THE DIRECTOR.—A DINNER, AND A RECONCILIATION.

"*Anne Page.* Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!"

Merry Wives of Windsor.

"*Page.* Come, gentle Master Slender, come: we stay for you.

Slender. I'll eat nothing, I thank you, sir.

Page. By cock and pye, you shall not choose, sir: come, come."

Ibid.

THE last morning of my celibacy dawned,—and by noon to-morrow I should be Benedict the married man. Every preparation for my wedding was completed—Sir Edward Davies and his daughters, near neighbours and intimate acquaintances of Mr. Harrison and Emily, had arrived the preceding evening at Ibbetson's, to accompany us to the altar; and, in a hasty despatch from York, Jack informed me that he would be in town for dinner, attended by his blooming bride. I was commissioned to provide suitable apartments for him in my own hotel, and further requested to visit Portland-place and mediate with the Director and his lady. I was implored to use my influence in averting parental wrath, and effect a reconciliation, if possible; for Sophia, it would appear, was nearly heart-broken; and nothing was required to make her the happiest of women but pardon for her offending. The old argument for forgiveness was stoutly urged—that the mischief was irremediable; and the old plea of love put forward—"love would be the lord of all" to the end of the chapter.

On calling at Clarges-street, I found Mr. Harrison in excellent spirits. He had recovered from the agitation my recent disappearance had occasioned, and he evinced sincere pleasure

when I acquainted him with the fortunate change that Mrs. Casey's death had made in the prospects of Jack the Devil. Manus Blake's letter amused him exceedingly; and at the allusion to himself, under the title of "old Square-toes," he laughed heartily. The simplicity of my poor uncle, in persuading himself that I had perpetrated Jack's iniquities—and the generous and affectionate feelings exhibited towards me, when under an impression that I was improvident, if not undone—were so characteristic of the man, that it elicited Mr. Harrison's admiration.

"I forgive him from the bottom of my heart," he exclaimed—"although, had I been silly enough to have afforded him an opportunity, he would have shot me without compunction. Write to him, John—tell him 'old Square-toes' estimates his worth, and, had he life enough to spare, would cultivate his acquaintance. Convey to him this small memorial"—and he drew from his finger an antique gem of some value—"and when I am gone, ask him to think sometimes with kind remembrance of one whom he once considered to be an enemy. Of course, you will go to Portland-place, and employ your mediation; and doubtless this recent acquisition of property will accelerate a reconciliation.—But what has become of that strange and mysterious female to whom you owe your life? You are bound by every tie of gratitude to provide for her proper maintenance, and protect her while she lives."

I told him that I had already sought an interview for this purpose; and soon after took my leave till dinner, when I had engaged to meet the baronet and his daughters, and also, at my grandfather's request, to bring Jack and the fair fugitive with me, should they reach town in time.

I sent my servant—who had just rejoined me from France, after obtaining his discharge by purchase from the Rifles—for Jack's drag, and set off for Portland-place on my work of mediation. It was now a subject of regret that I had not availed myself of Sophia's offer, and been presented to her mamma; as, being a stranger, there was some awkwardness in deputing me to open this delicate investigation. I took courage, knocked stoutly, sent up my card, and was admitted to the same room where I had been formerly so instrumental in aiding and counselling the very act of disobedience that I was now come to extenuate. The identity of name and title, and my strong resemblance to the delinquent, affected Mrs. Moreland;—she began to cry—I to apologise—when, greatly to my relief, an elderly gentleman with powdered hair added himself to the party, and was announced as "Mr. Moreland."

In a very short time, I perceived my embassy would terminate successfully. The lady was too devotedly attached to Madame Sophia to hold out; and whatever the honest Director might have felt, when once *Madame Mère* signified intentions of relenting, he would have found it good policy to become of "softer mood." After some discussion, some explanation, and an appeal to maternal love, the decease of Mother Casey and its consequences turned the scale; and on my undertaking that Jack should be amenable to all reasonable settlement of his lady's fortune, present and prospective, pardon was graciously vouchsafed.

"And when, sir, may we expect to see them in town?" inquired the Director.—"This very evening," I replied. "Poor Sophia's anxiety to throw herself at your feet could not be restrained; and I have received letters to say they were on the road hither, with directions to have apartments engaged for them at my hotel."

"It is better," said the lady, "Mr. Moreland, that we receive them here. Let them drive at once to Portland-place, Captain Blake, and for the present take up their residence with us."

The Director willingly assented to the proposal of *Madame Mère;* and I, of course, lauded the magnanimity which extended an amnesty to the offenders.

"I will answer for my kinsman's gratitude," I continued. "Jack, madam, will duly estimate this generous kindness. But this is the last day of my bachelor career—to-morrow, like my fortunate cousin, I too shall wear the bonds of Hymen; and my grandfather has requested that the fugitives shall dine with him in Clarges-street, and in the morning accompany me and my bride to the altar. Mrs. Casey's death will, though I should lament to own it, prove an agreeable surprise to my worthy cousin; and might I afford one equally so to the fair lady?"—"Anything Captain Blake pleased," was Mrs. Moreland's gracious reply.

"Then, madam, allow me to come here to supper, a self-invited guest, and bring two visitors along with me."—"Excellent," said the Director; "and not a word about forgiveness till the offenders are in the house."

"Not a syllable, sir: you may depend upon my discretion. After we leave Berners for Clarges-street, will you permit your servants to transport their baggage hither? I shall direct my fellow to deliver over their goods and chattels, and I pledge my word the first intimation of plenary pardon shall come from your own lips."

We separated on excellent terms—and in proof of a full and family reconciliation, Mr. and Mrs. Moreland graciously assented to my request, and promised to assist to-morrow at my bridal.

From the Director's I drove to St. James's-street, to have my wedding garment fitted duly by Mr. Nugee—inspected the travelling carriage which had been sent home—gave directions to my servant to pack up—visited the cynic in his own den—and received by his hands a farewell letter from the "best of daughters," my quondam instructress in piquet, expressing her own and her husband's gratitude for what they were pleased to term my liberal and generous assistance. She informed me they would leave for Liverpool next day, and on the third embark in a liner for New York.

From Aylmer's I proceeded to Norfolk-street, and sent up to inquire for Marianne. The maid, as usual, brought me a short billet to the phaeton; it thanked me for my kindness—told me her bodily health was good, and her mental far better than could be expected after witnessing the scenes I knew of.

The morning slipped over—my last day of liberty was hurrying to its close. I drove to the hotel—it was time to dress—and the fugitives were not arrived.

I completed my toilet as six struck. How provoking! I must leave a note for them. I sent for a coach, and commenced writing; but before

my vehicle came lumbering to the door, a carriage with four smoking horses rattled down the street and pulled up. It was the expected party—all in "*statu quo*" as when they started—Jack "large as life," and the bride beautiful as a houri. I flew down stairs—received, kissed her, and so forth—and in a dozen words communicated the old gentleman's invitation. Sophia hurried off to dress, and I took Jack to my own dressing-room, where, during the progress of his toilet, I could supply him with such portions of intelligence as I deemed it prudent at the present time to disclose.

To a rapid detail of my imprisonment and escape, he listened in speechless astonishment; while an intimation that Mother Casey had shuffled off her mortal coil, occasioned the demolition of the water-bottle.

"Dead!" exclaimed Jack the Devil; "and is Honor fairly sodded?"—"Ay, snug in Ballintubber Abbey; and attended by a string of mourning coaches that would have done her heart good, could she but have seen the smart turn-out that accompanied her to the resting place of her progenitors."

"And the old tailor's money, John?" inquired my kinsman, with a mouth half-opened and a stare of great anxiety.—"Gone to found an asylum for reduced gentlemen, with a special proviso that you shall have choice of an apartment."

"Confound her memory!" rejoined the affectionate relative.

"Ay; this comes of horsewhipping the attorney."—"No doubt," said Jack, with a sigh: "the cursed scoundrel invented this asylum scheme, and put it into her head, I'll be sworn."

"Come, Jack—I have better news for you. 'Auld Clootey' sticks to you like a gentleman. Every guinea that Jerry gathered up goes to your father eventually—nothing left away but the cats and canaries, with ten pounds a year to the parrot for life, and a few small annuities to half a dozen paupers of the name and lineage of Casey."

"Bravo! John. Go on, my Jewel!"—"No, Jack; I must hurry Madame Sophia. The old gentleman will be waiting dinner, and I can chat to you in the coach."

The bride was dressed—the coach in waiting—we embarked, after I had given necessary instructions to my servant for the transfer of the personal property of the refugees. Jack rapturously communicated the joyful news—and I added, that negotiations with the high estates in Portland Place were to be commenced, and under flattering auspices, to-morrow.

"Well, John—any other intelligence from home?—what does the old boy say besides?"—"Why, he has bought two first-rate hunters, wants three saddles from Whippy, and a bust of Sir Francis Burdett."

"Ah, I like that," said Jack the Devil; "he's getting the kennel up again."—"Ay, and stocking the cellar anew."

"Excellent, John; anything else?"—"Your mother has promised to perform a station at Ball,* in honour not only of your escape from Pauline, but of your intended reformation. I suppose, as she is a good Catholic, she'll keep her word."

"Nonsense, man! have done with this folly."

* A holy well in the west of Ireland, held in great estimation by Catholic devotees.

I caught Sophia's eye, and in its mischievous glance I read ample encouragement to tease her liege lord.

"An old friend of yours is unwell."—"Indeed; who is it?"

"Faith—I forgot her name. Mary—Mary—Pshaw!—she with the black eyes, to whom you sent the cloak and bonnet."

"What!" exclaimed Sophia—"what's that about cloaks, bonnets, and black eyes?"—"Nothing, love; some nonsense of John's," replied the culprit.

"I wish it was," I returned drily. "Poor soul! she is seriously indisposed, and gone for change of air to Roscommon."

"Now, John, 'pon my life, this is unfair; you know I'm married."—"Yes, Jack; but surely, for all that, you must feel interested at the indisposition of a favourite. Was black-eye pretty? She was very amiable by all accounts, as she never broke Lent or missed mass."

Fortunately for Jack the Devil the coach stopped—I handed Sophia out. As she was throwing off her shawl, my kinsman was particularly officious. "Ah, you false, you treacherous man!" said the bride, with mischievous gravity, while she pressed my arm as we ascended the stairs, and with difficulty kept from laughing at the dolorous look that the bridegroom's face exhibited.

We entered the drawing-room—Mr. Harrison received the fair fugitive with great urbanity—Emily kissed and embraced her new cousin, and all in due course tendered their congratulations.

We found a "fair assembly" collected upon this festive occasion; and considering the almost ascetic life the old man generally led, this was on his part an extensive effort at hilarity. Sir Henry Davis and his daughters—the little colonel and the cynic—Jack and his bride—formed the company. Dinner was announced, and we proceeded to the parlour. To me and my friend O'Donnel the table duties were entrusted; while Mr. Harrison placed himself at the side of the board, with the pretty bride beside him.

Every thing was as it ought to be—elegant and *recherché*; for my grandfather had employed an *artiste* of great celebrity, and the feast was creditable to a man of talent. The dessert was put down. The little colonel rose, requested a bumper, and proposed the healths of the bride and bride elect. The old gentleman seconded the short commander warmly, and took that opportunity to present Emily with the family jewels beautifully reset: to the bride he gave a splendid suit of emeralds, and to the bride's-maids for to-morrow valuable necklaces of amethyst and pearls. Soon after, the ladies left us.

"Sir Henry," said the old gentleman, "you can remember when I should have proved a better host: if these soldiers neglect their duties, hold me, I beseech you, harmless. Come, Colonel O'Donnel, we must drink to the bridegroom, and, as Mrs. Page says, pray that—

"'Heaven may give him many.'"

"Yes," said the short commander, "none need be vainer of his conquest, to judge from the lady's beauty—and every circumstance proves how sincere and disinterested her affection was."

"Talking of good luck, I think that Mother Casey's death was not amiss," said the cynic.

Jack made a very elegant acknowledgment, and sat down.

"And yet," I remarked, "how tangled is the web of fortune! Hymen has smiled upon my kinsman under the dusky guise of a Scotch blacksmith; and dame Fortune bestowed her favours by the decease of the honest dowager—and yet Jack is far from happy, if he would but confess it."

"Why, what the devil do you mean?" exclaimed the bridegroom, testily.—"Nothing, my dear fellow, but the pressure of your mercantile embarrassments. The best of men cannot guard against them."

"Mercantile embarrassments! Are you mad or drunk? No, no;—it's too early for that."—"I am neither;—I mean nothing, Jack, but your failure in the tobacco trade."

"The tobacco trade!" exclaimed the cynic with a broad stare; while my grandfather's grey eye began to twinkle, as he perceived the point my raillery turned to.

"Yes, Jack; we are all friends, and the thing needs no concealment. The Brighton firm will be probably in the next gazette, and 'Blake and Jackson' notified on a certain day to surrender at Guildhall, with some solicitor of Old Jewry 'provisional assignee.'"

"By the Lord, John, this is too bad! I have fired at a man for less."—"I don't question that," said Mr. Harrison, drily.

"I merely, Jack, apprise you of the state of affairs. There, Aylmer, peruse that letter, and say if matters are not alarming." I threw him Miss Jackson's epistle, and he read it in an audible voice, and with the greatest gravity.

"Now, Jack," I said, "what between the loss of military custom—the refusal of Mr. Jones to supply short-cut and brown mixture—not to talk of the opposition over the way, what chance have you as a dealer and chapman?"

Jack laughed heartily himself.

"Ah! Mr. Harrison, is not this ungenerous of my kinsman? I trusted him to open letters in my absence, and see the advantage he takes of a misplaced confidence."

"And here, sir," I replied, "read this, the postscript of his honoured father—judge then between us, and say what he deserves at my hands."

Jack looked very foolish, as he listened for the first time to the epistle of Manus Blake.

"Here, gentlemen—here am I accommodated with all the credit of my kinsman's notoriety!—Fy, Jack, fy!—not only to slander me, your loving cousin, but induce your excellent mother, my good aunt, to scrape her knees round the blessed well of Ball on my account, and that too under false pretences."

"Mr. Harrison, will you protect me? for this merciless relative will have no pity."

The old man smiled.

"Certainly, gallant captain; I must come to your assistance; and the first man who mentions a figurante or tobacco dealer this night, shall pay the penalty of a full bumper."

The evening passed on agreeably. We joined the ladies in the drawing-room—had coffee, and left Clarges-street at eleven o'clock, after due arrangements had been made by all concerned to meet next morning, proceed to St. George's, and afterwards return to breakfast with my grandfather; who, from his infirmities, prudently declined to accompany us to church, and delegated to the little colonel the high honour of giving the bride away.

"What think you of your new cousin?" I inquired of the Director's daughter, as we drove from Clarges-street.—"Who can have any opinion but one?" she answered. "She is not only beautiful, but so sweet, so artless, so fascinating!—Heigho! I felt ashamed whenever her eyes met mine—and when she asked me some questions about the madcap expedition which that scapegrace unhappily persuaded me to undertake, I felt so naughty-looking. Ah! poor Emily—had she a mother so kind as mine, she would not have returned her love with the ingratitude which I did."

"And, dearest Sophia," said Jack, dolorously, "am I to infer that you repent the step, and regret your confidence?"—"Umph! I fear not;—I have not, alas! grace enough to be a penitent."

I heard a kiss duly given in acknowledgment.

"Lord! we are past the turning," exclaimed Benedict. "Why, where is the fellow driving to?"—"To set me down where I am engaged to sup. Surely you are not in such a hurry home, that to drive through a couple of streets can be of such material consequence?"

"How easy this chariot is! I never felt but one carriage like it. Heigho! I suppose I shall never enter that one more."

"Where the deuce are your fellows driving, John? Surely that is Langham church?"

"Good God! I cannot bear to pass my father's," said the bride.—"Shut your eyes then, as children do who fear ghosts and find themselves in the dark."

The carriage stopped—the Director's hall-door flew open—there were the whole establishment in expectation, and the old gentleman, with his powdered head, ready in his proper person to hand out the fugitive.

"Well, you are the boy after all," said Jack the Devil in a whisper, after the first salutation in the hall was over. "You managed this affair inimitably.—But, for God's sake, not a syllable more about tobacco."

"I was thinking of naming it to the old fellow," I replied; "he might be induced to take a share—'Moreland, Blake, and Jackson,'—what a firm!—Hang it! in time you would eclipse Lundy Foot himself."

"Hush! Jack, you'll make Sophia jealous."

"Ah, poor soul! if every woman had as good cause.—But, in with you, man—don't you see the old lady waiting to bestow her benediction!"

Nothing indeed could be more sincere than the reconciliation in Portland-place, and when I left the Director's at midnight, there was not a happier family within the bills of mortality than Mr. Moreland's.

On my return to Berners-street, I found a letter on the table from Marianne, and the handwriting at once evinced the deep agitation of the person who penned this hurried epistle. It ran thus:—

"Vainly have I endeavoured to nerve myself for an interview, and communicate a portion of my history to the only one on earth whom, as I believe, it could interest—but the task is too much, and I cannot muster courage. You, who witnessed my self-possession during a scene of

slaughter, may smile at this assertion; yet she, who dared a murderer's vengeance to achieve your deliverance, would quail before the eye of him whose life she preserved at the hazard of her own. Blake, these are the last lines I shall address to you! From this hour I am dead to you and to the world—*forgive me* if you can; if you cannot, then *forget me*. When I am gone, some memorial from me will announce the event, and, in the grave, *you* may extend your pity, and *I* find that rest, from which, when living, sin and shame debarred me!"

It was a strange commencement;—who was she? and in what way could I be interested in her history, beyond the wish to know something of a person to whom I was indebted for my preservation? She saved, and yet she shrank from me—it was passing strange. I took the letter up, and it thus proceeded:—

"Many years have elapsed since, at the early age of twenty-two, I found myself an heiress and a widow. What my personal attractions were then, it would now be vanity in me to say; but if man's admiration be the meed of beauty, mine must have been uncommon—for none commanded more general admiration than I. Yet what a wretched career has mine been! Looking in a foreign country for a tranquillity unattainable in my own, and with all the advantages that wealth and beauty could bestow, dragging on a miserable existence, and seeking in revelry and dissipation to find

> "'Some sweet oblivious antidote
> To cleanse the bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart.'

"How shall I disclose my secret, or trace upon this paper a name which, from childhood, you have been taught to execrate? Dare I judge from your bearing, that yours is not a vindictive heart? But even were it so, my offendings, if misery can atone for sin, have been amply expiated. How did you find me—*me*—the once flattered and idolised? But peace, idle memory!—you found me the inmate of a felon's den—the companion of a gang of outcasts.

"I have suffered, but none shall know the tale. I have been torn from my palmy state—I, whom nobles vied for—I, whom crowds worshipped—for what was I reserved?—To be the victim of a villain—the associate of a gambler—and step by step descending in the scale of infamy, until the crimes of others drove me from society, in reputation as blasted as themselves!

"Blake, you will never hear from me again when living. On the produce of some jewels saved from the total wreck of all I once had, I have secured a safe retreat. When I am at rest, a memorial of my death will reach you, and announce that longed-for consummation. For twenty-two years I have worn the picture of your father, and, when life is parting, I shall send it as a token to his child."

I dropped the letter. Dark suspicions flashed across my mind. After a moment I again resumed its reading, and it was brief.

"Farewell, Blake! Curse me not when the fatal name is written. Remember, that the destroyer of the father was the preserver of the son. Pity, and, if you can, pray for that guilty being who sends you her eternal farewell!"

The signature was what I had anticipated. Marianne, the outcast's mistress, was once the fascinating Harriette Kirwan. Lost and fallen woman!

> "Her name that was as fresh
> As Dian's visage, now begrim'd and black."

CONCLUSION.

> "Now all the blessings
> Of a glad father compass thee about."
> *The Tempest.*
>
> "Oh! he is gone indeed!"
> *King Lear.*

NEVER did a lovelier morning break through the dusky atmosphere of London, than that on which I submitted to wear the golden fetters of the god of marriage. Matrimony is a common-place affair, and mine, I presume, went off in the usual way. I cannot describe the bride's attire, as I do not exactly know the difference between blonde and muslin. The papers asserted that it was fashionable and expensive; and I'll be sworn that it was particularly becoming. There was no scene at the altar—one or two fugitive tears—but not an attempt at hysterics. In truth, Emily's love was so fixed and confiding, that she had no doubtings to overcome or fears to vanquish; and as to me, I replied to the parson's interrogatories in as firm a voice as if I were relieving the Castle-guard in Dublin. The bride's-maids were exceedingly pretty—the cynic looked as if he had half determined to think better of the world—while the short commander sported his Portuguese order and Waterloo riband "for the nonce," and, I verily believe, estimated the honour of giving Emily away almost as highly, as if employed in carrying a message to a field-marshal. One sigh escaped—I turned round—it was Sophia's.

"I was just thinking," she said, "but for that graceless villain who is flirting so busily with the bride's-maids," and she pointed to her own liege lord, "that I too might have been married in a christian way, instead of scampering across the kingdom, hurry-scurry, at the mercy of dark nights and drunken postillions, one moment threatened with immediate death, and the next stimulated by the promise of a guinea."

"How devilish well Jack looks to-day!" I replied carelessly—"does he not?" and her eyes sparkled. "Heigho! if the thing were to do again, I am half afraid I should not have grace enough to say *No!*"

"Do not, dear Sophia, have a doubt upon the question: you would be ready for the road a good hour before the time that Jack required you."—"Go, you vile slanderer! Why is there not an act of parliament to protect weak women, and keep those nuisances, your countrymen, at home?"

We left town directly after breakfast, and approached Stainsbury as evening was closing in. How different were my feelings now, from those I had experienced lately, while making my experimental visit to the old man. Bonfires were blazing in the street—the bells from the old tower rang out their merry welcome—I entered the park-gates as lord of all around, and—happier boast—as the husband of Emily Clifden. Phœbe, the tried *confidante* of the father, the faithful ally

of the son, was waiting on the steps to receive us; and I, who but one short month ago, could not have counted on a civil reception, returned to Stainsbury Hall its master.

Months rolled on. A letter come to me from New York—it was from my first flame, Lucinda Daly, announcing that her husband was a reformed, and she trusted, would eventually become a prosperous man. She further mentioned, that the vessel in which Sedley and his vile companions had embarked, had been run down in a gale of wind by a whale-ship, and not a soul was saved. About the same time, a packet reached me containing my father's miniature. I understood its import well—she who had sinned and suffered so deeply was no more—and, Charity would hope, exchanged "the ills" of life for that place where "the weary are at rest."

From Jack and "my cousin his bedfellow," I heard frequently. They had visited Ireland soon after their marriage, and the lady was in raptures with the ardent and flattering reception she had experienced. She described my kinsman as a pattern for husbands generally. He had, she informed me, bestowed his aversion upon the opera, and all connected with it; and no inducement could persuade him to enter into the tobacco trade again. From Jack the Devil, I learned that the cloud which for a season had obscured the fortunes of our house, had melted into "glorious sunshine." The castle was filled with visitors—Manus Blake was more hospitable, and my aunt, if possible, more holy. The pack was acknowledged to be the best in Connaught—they would "go the pace," and you "could cover them with a carpet." In the stables were sundry celebrated weight-carriers, whom he duly enumerated—all in top condition, and as fine fencers as ever took a sinner over a six-feet wall.

Months rolled on—a new era in my history opened—Emily, after a fortunate confinement, made me a father, and blessed me with a boy—and Mr. Harrison declared that his cup of happiness was filled almost to overflowing.

Stainsbury Park was now a scene of festivity. The tenantry were feasted on the lawn, and the house filled with all the beauty and fashion of the vicinity, to witness the naming of the heir. Jack and Sophia were present—the lady having returned to London previously to her expected *accouchement*. Aylmer had come special from Wales; and, from his unwonted urbanity, appeared infected with the general joy. The little colonel was in high feather, having just landed from Ostend, after managing a delicate and complicated affair of honour with his usual tact, and bringing his friend, Lord Edward Delamere, out of an awkward *escapade* with great *éclat*.

The ceremony was over—feasting and hilarity succeeded—evening came—and at his customary hour Mr. Harrison bade his numerous guests "Good night." He paused for a moment at the door—pressed Emily fondly to his heart; and, as he laid his hand upon my arm, implored heaven's blessing on us both, and prayed that we might be happy as our union had rendered him. There was an unusual degree of tenderness and solemnity in his manner—and we felt glad when he retired with his servant, as the scene was almost painful.

I was dressed when Robert tapped at the door to tell me how the old man had rested. He was not yet awake, although it was long past the usual hour; but possibly he might have been restless from the agitation of the recent ceremony. Likely he would be awake now; and I accompanied the attendant to pay my morning duty.

All within the chamber was still—and, while Robert unclosed the shutters, I opened the curtains, and looked at my grandfather. How soundly he slept! Was it not strange that the light did not awake him? It was a pity to disturb him—his slumbers were placid, and a smile played over his pale features. Was this sleep? I touched the hand that was resting on the pillow—it was cold—cold as marble! He had slumbered existence away—and Mr. Harrison was dead!

THE END.

Edinburgh, August 1884.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

J. FENIMORE COOPER.—6d. each.

1. The Waterwitch.
2. The Pathfinder. (L. 2.)
3. The Deerslayer. (L. 1.)
4. Last of Mohicans. (L. 3.)
5. The Pilot.
6. The Prairie. (L. 5.)
8. The Spy.
9. The Red Rover.
10. Homeward Bound.
7. Eve Effingham. (Seq.)
11. The Two Admirals.
12. Miles Wallingford.
16. Afloat and Ashore. (Sequel.)
13. The Pioneers. (L. 4.)
14. Wyandotte.
15. Lionel Lincoln.
17. The Bravo.
18. The Sea Lions.
19. The Headsman.
20. Precaution.
21. The Oak Openings.
22. Heidenmauer.
56. Mark's Reef.
57. Ned Myers.
58. Satanstoe.
59. The Borderers.
74. Jack Tier.
77. Mercedes.

L. 1 to 5 are the "Leather-Stocking Tales."

SIR WALTER SCOTT.—6d. each.

37. Guy Mannering.
38. The Antiquary.
39. Ivanhoe.
40. Fortunes of Nigel.
41. Heart of Midlothian.
42. Bride of Lammermoor.
43. Waverley.
44. Rob Roy.
45. Kenilworth.
46. The Pirate.
47. The Monastery.
48. Old Mortality.
53. Peveril of the Peak.
54. Quentin Durward.
55. St. Ronan's Well.
71. The Abbot.
81. The Black Dwarf.
86. Woodstock.
87. Anne of Geierstein.
88. Betrothed.
89. Fair Maid of Perth.
90. Surgeon's Daughter, &c.
91. The Talisman.
92. Count Robert of Paris.
93. Redgauntlet.

MRS. RADCLIFFE.—6d. each.

114. Romance of the Forest.
116. The Italian.
117. Mysteries of Udolpho. Part 1.
118. Ditto. Part 2.

VARIOUS AUTHORS.—6d. each.

29. Robinson Crusoe. DEFOE.
31. Colleen Bawn. GERALD GRIFFIN.
32. Vicar of Wakefield. GOLDSMITH.
33. Sketch Book. WASHINGTON IRVING.
34. Tristram Shandy. STERNE.
35. A Sentimental Journey. STERNE.
36. English Opium Eater. DE QUINCEY.
49. Essays of Elia. CHARLES LAMB.
50. Notre Dame. VICTOR HUGO.
72. Gulliver's Travels. SWIFT.
110. Last Essays of Elia. C. LAMB.
119. The Shadowless Man.
124. Baron Trenck.
129. Swiss Family Robinson.
144. Rory O'More. LOVER.
145. Wild Irish Girl. Lady MORGAN.
146. Trials of Margaret Lyndsay. Professor WILSON.
151. Two Years Before the Mast; or, A Sailor's Life at Sea. DANA.
152. Valentine Vox. Vol. 1. COCKTON.
153. Ditto. Vol. 2. Ditto.
159. Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus.
160. The Scottish Chiefs. JANE PORTER, 192 pages.
163. Nightside of Nature. Mrs. CROWE.

AMERICAN HUMOROUS BOOKS.—6d. each.

23. Artemus Ward, his Book.
24. Artemus Ward, his Travels.
25. The Nasby Papers.
26. Major Jack Downing.
27. The Biglow Papers.
112. Ditto. 2nd Series.
28. Orpheus C. Kerr.
111. Hans Breitmann.
113. Josh Billings.
120. Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick. 1st Series.
121. Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick. 2nd Series.
122. Ditto. 3rd Series.
52. Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.
85. Professor at the Breakfast Table.
164. The Poet at the Breakfast Table. O. W. HOLMES.
165. The Celebrated Jumping Frog. MARK TWAIN.
166. Luck of Roaring Camp. BRET HARTE.
167. Innocents Abroad. MARK TWAIN.

WIDE, WIDE WORLD SERIES.—6d. each.

1. The Prince of the House of David.
2. The Throne of David.
3. The Pillar of Fire.
4. The Wide, Wide World.
5. Queechy.
6. Uncle Tom's Cabin.
7. The Lamplighter.

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, Broadway, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.

ROUTLEDGE'S
SIXPENNY SERIES

A Series of the *Cheapest Standard Books for Youth* ever published in this or any other country. Each book contains from 64 to 80 large pages, with from 40 to 80 Illustrations (in some cases many more), well Printed, and Stitched in a Durable Paper Cover.

1. ROBINSON CRUSOE.
With 40 Illustrations by J. D. WATSON. 80 pp.

2. THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON.
With 40 Illustrations

3. SANDFORD AND MERTON.
With 70 Illustrations.

4. GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES.
With 70 Illustrations.

5. ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES.
With 60 Illustrations.

6. THE BOY'S OWN NATURAL HISTORY.
With 350 Illustrations by W. HARVEY.

7. ÆSOP'S FABLES.
With 114 Illustrations by HARRISON WEIR.

8. THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.
With 40 Illustrations.

9. THE "BAB" BALLADS. By W. S. GILBERT.
With 225 Illustrations by the Author.

10. LONGFELLOW'S POETICAL WORKS.
Author's Copyright Edition. With 40 Illustrations by SIR JOHN GILBERT R.A.

11. OLIVER TWIST. By CHARLES DICKENS.
With 16 Illustrations by J. MAHONEY.